



General Assembly

Seventy-second session

18th plenary meeting

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Official Records

President: Mr. Lajčák (Slovakia)

The meeting was called to order at 6.05 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Wilfred Elrington, Attorney General and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Belize.

Mr. Elrington (Belize): On behalf of the Government and the people of Belize, I extend our heartfelt condolences to the populations of our sister countries in the Caribbean for the destruction and loss of life and property caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Belize stands united with other friendly countries of the world to assist and to render our full support to our sister countries and friends in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). I also extend Belize's warmest feelings of solidarity and sympathy to the people of Mexico, our immediate neighbours to the north, as they commence a difficult recovery process following the death and destruction caused by the two recent earthquakes.

As you observed in your opening statement (see A/72/PV.3), Mr. President, you have assumed the presidency of the General Assembly at a most challenging time for multilateralism. Be assured nonetheless that my Government and people have every confidence in your leadership, and I pledge to you our full and active support as you embark on the task of addressing the agenda of the seventy-second session of the Assembly, focusing on people and striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet.

With regard to the Belizean experience, Belize celebrated its thirty-sixth year of independence on 21 September. In the 36 years since independence, we have matured into a unified nation, embracing all peoples in the fabric of our society and enjoying a peaceful existence. We have worked assiduously to uplift every Belizean, especially those who have been victims of anachronistic prejudices, and we have done so with an eye to ensuring that successive generations can benefit from the fruits of our labours and our natural resources. Our development has been modest in relative terms, but progressive and steady.

We have readily embraced the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and launched our Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy for Belize 2016-2019, which incorporates the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Our nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement further complement the SDGs. We are already seeing the dividends of that early investment in policy and action. Belize has met several goals on road safety, marine protection and sustainable fisheries.

These early accomplishments are mere benchmarks. We know that for our sustainable development, we must go above and beyond such accomplishments, so my Government is setting even more ambitious targets. At the Ocean Conference, we announced our commitment to further strengthening the legislative and regulatory framework on fisheries, increasing our marine reserves from 3 per cent to 10 per cent of our territorial waters and implementing legislation to curb the use of plastics. Among our ambitious climate-action

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contributions, Belize is committed to zero-emissions growth in its forestry sector and aims to achieve 85 per cent renewables in electricity production by 2027.

In addition to our actions at the national level, we are also undertaking regional action by leveraging the strength of the Caribbean Community to optimize results for all our peoples by uniting our efforts aimed at fighting disease and security threats. Belize proudly hosted the launch of the CARICOM First Ladies and Spouses of Prime Ministers Network in support of the Implementation of SDG 5 and the Every Caribbean Woman, Every Caribbean Child initiative. Our leaders are also renewing and deepening efforts to tackle non-communicable diseases through targeted approaches aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles, starting with the youngest members of our communities.

For our region, security and climate change are equally fundamental threats to our survival. The region has risen to meet these challenges by adopting its own counter-terrorism strategy and pioneering innovative approaches to building resilience and facilitating its transition to low- and no-carbon economies across the region.

I will now address the challenges and opportunities of financing people-centred development. The cost of implementation is by no means negligible. At the national level, conservative estimates put the cost of implementation of our Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy at a quarter of Belize's gross domestic product. Belize's development finance strategy mirrors the Addis Ababa Agenda for Action. We are tapping into a mix of domestic and international resources through various channels, keeping in mind the inhospitable international policy environment. Domestically, my Government is strengthening its capacity to improve revenue collection.

Incentivizing business investment in Belize is also a critical action point for my Government. Like other vulnerable small island developing States (SIDS), Belize saw a sharp decline in foreign direct investment over the period from 2015 to 2016. As of 2016, foreign direct investment flows to SIDS represented only 0.2 per cent of overall global flows. To buck this downward trend, we have reformed the incentives for doing business in Belize to comport with the policy space permitted by our World Trade Organization obligations.

We have also reformed key institutions to ensure the integrity of our financial services industry. The

Government has strengthened the institutional capacity, legislative framework and supervisory mandate of its financial intelligence unit. The Caribbean Financial Action Task Force has determined that Belize is in compliance with international standards. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes, which at present sets international standards on tax cooperation, has listed Belize as a largely compliant tax jurisdiction, following Belize successful completion of the Global Forum peer review of its legislative, regulatory and administrative framework.

In 2013, Belize adopted the multilateral Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters, the purpose of which is to facilitate cooperation among jurisdictions with a view to combating tax avoidance and evasion internationally. Additionally, Belize is committed to the Automatic Exchange of Information standard and has entered into 31 bilateral Exchange of Information agreements.

Nevertheless, Belize's reputation, financial industry and economy remain vulnerable as a result of unilateral declarations that have labelled our jurisdiction as uncooperative or non-compliant. Such unilateral declarations cause undue damage to Belize's reputation and the integrity of its financial services industry. They also dissuade investors and undermine the significant legislative and administrative measures undertaken by our Government to ensure Belize's compliance with international standards and legal obligations. But even worse, they undermine the very legitimacy of the institutions that promulgate the global standards by which we are all supposed to be measured.

In Belize's view, the United Nations must enforce the necessary checks and balances that are part of the international financial architecture. We see a role for the United Nations in acting as a central multilateral forum where efforts are consolidated and coherence and international cooperation promoted on issues that support domestic resource mobilization. Because of its universal nature, the United Nations is in the best position to foster a more inclusive, transparent and consultative process for addressing such issues as international cooperation on tax matters and the broader question of financing for sustainable development.

Notwithstanding our best efforts, we cannot meet the costs of implementation with our domestic

resources alone. We rely on our bilateral partners from the North and the South. We have also developed strong working relationships with multilateral development banks. But with our current status as a middle-income country, our access to grant and concessional financing is severely constrained. Belize is in the unenviable position of being a heavily indebted middle-income country. Our external public debt stands at 70 per cent of our gross domestic product, or \$2.3 billion, and the domestic debt at 22 per cent of gross domestic product, or \$750 million. The cost of interest for these debt obligations is \$109 million for the current fiscal year alone. Without viable alternatives, my Government has to finance its development by contracting loans at market rates.

My Government has endeavoured to appeal to our private creditors to renegotiate the onerous bonds that threaten to upend the sustainability of our debt. However, the world of international private finance does not place a high priority on public policy, much less the public policy of a foreign Government. With the ongoing crises resulting from the withdrawal of correspondent banking services from relationships with our indigenous financial institutions, the entire Caribbean is experiencing this reality. To the likes of Bank of America or JPMorgan Chase it matters not that ending correspondent banking relations with a national bank or a central bank effectively excludes that nation from the global financial system, and, in response, the country where those banks are located offers nothing more than sympathy. That is a major concern, not just for the Caribbean but for all developing countries, given the universal pivot towards the private sector financing the development agenda.

It would behoove the United Nations to develop a participatory framework for the private sector in order to keep account of their commitments made and actions taken to advance global goals. The High-level Political Forum offers a useful platform for integrating such a framework. The United Nations should also develop appropriate capacities to track the alignment of private financial flows with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is also incumbent on the United Nations to accelerate progress in redefining development metrics to respond to the anomaly of heavily indebted middle-income countries, particularly those with unique challenges, such as small island developing States.

Belize welcomes the Secretary-General's commitment to SIDS. I would like to take this opportunity to commend him and you, Mr. President, for holding a special session on Hurricane Irma. I wish to extend my own Government's pledge of solidarity to the members of our Caribbean family that were devastated by that unprecedented storm and, more recently, by Hurricane Maria. Hurricanes Irma and Maria have exposed the acute humanitarian challenge and the equally acute development challenge that SIDS face. That challenge is, without question, a global one, as the Secretary-General has rightly stated. We look forward to engaging in action-oriented discussions in order to facilitate piloting such financing-for-sustainable-development initiatives across SIDS as debt swaps for climate action and the expansion of climate risk insurance, and to support adaptation measures at individual to national levels.

The United Nations can serve as a global incubator for genuine and durable multi-stakeholder partnerships that can foster innovation and entrepreneurship in SIDS. At the national level, we are ready to engage in discussions on how to ensure that the United Nations is fit for our country's purposes on the ground as we aim to implement the ambitious 2030 Agenda and develop country-specific solutions for sustainable financing.

Belize fully agrees with the Secretary-General that the United Nations has a crucial role to play as a catalyst, an innovator, a convenor and a champion of what works. Since its inception, the United Nations has been orchestrating a rules-based framework for helping countries to cooperate and take collective action. As we embrace a new era of openness, transparency and accountability, United Nations operations must also reflect the openness, transparency and accountability of all who engage and benefit from international cooperation.

We depend on the United Nations to champion and protect the rule of law, ensure the universality of core agreements and develop new treaties in order to address gaps where they exist. That is why Belize looks to the United Nations as a firewall between democracy and tyranny, between social justice and oppression, and between the global good and self-interest. Its ultimate role is to protect the interests of humankind as a whole. In this spirit, we expect the United Nations to act, and we therefore insist that the overdue reforms of the peace and security architecture of the United Nations,

especially the Security Council, be completed forthwith so that there can be no obstacle to action.

Belize has long supported the United Nations in fulfilling its role. We have supported its endeavours to forge new partnerships for development, advance global health policies, bring justice to victims of crimes against humanity, protect the most vulnerable and control the spread of weapons of mass destruction, including small arms and light weapons. We have been at the forefront of the global fight to protect and preserve our shared natural environment against environmental degradation and climate change and to ensure the sustainable use of the planet, especially of our oceans, which sustain life on earth. Through the Caribbean Community, we are also leading the charge to deliver reparations to the victims of slavery and their descendants.

For Belize, as a State Member of the United Nations, advocating for peaceful cooperation among States, the right to self-determination for all peoples and the promotion and protection of human rights is a non-derogable duty. We therefore cannot remain silent wherever injustice persists. We see injustice perpetrated against the people of Taiwan, who uphold the core purposes and principles of the United Nations, while, in contrast, the United Nations fails to uphold those purposes and principles with respect to them.

For more than half a century, the people of Cuba have been the victims of the injustice of an egregious and illegal unilateral embargo. We also see injustice continuing to cast a shadow over the peoples of Palestine, Syria, Yemen, Western Sahara and South Sudan, among others.

The situation in Venezuela is one that continues to challenge all of us in our region and hemisphere. Belize fully subscribes to the position of CARICOM, which underscores respect for international law and international principles and urges resolution through dialogue. To that end, CARICOM has offered its own good offices.

In our region, we continue to witness the suffering of our Haitian brothers and sisters. Belize cannot remain silent in the face of such intolerable injustice, nor should the rest of the world. We support United Nations efforts aimed at bringing justice to all who have been alienated, oppressed, victimized or silenced. When we fail to uphold our duty to the norms and values of the United Nations, humankind itself suffers. But when we defend those norms and values, there is no

greater redemption. The Haitian people know this fact all too well, and, with good reason, they look hopefully towards the new United Nations approach to cholera in Haiti and the establishment of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti.

Similarly, when Belize's territorial integrity was at issue, Belize turned to the United Nations to defend the country's sovereignty over its land, and, for as long as we have been a dutiful Member State, we have had peace. We want that peace to endure, so we have taken every possible step to bring Guatemala to the table of justice in order to resolve that country's unfounded claim on our territory.

In 2008, Belize and Guatemala agreed to refer the Guatemalan claim to Belizean territory to the International Court of Justice, the Organization's judicial arm, subject to the will of each of our peoples. Both Belize and Guatemala are poised to hold the requisite referendums to obtain our peoples' consent. In the meantime, with the full support of the Organization of American States, we continue to take a constructive approach to our bilateral relations and to maintaining peace along the borders. Belize remains committed to working with Guatemala to finalize a cooperation mechanism for the Sarstoon River in order to minimize the potential for tensions or incidents along Belize's southern border.

In conclusion, for the past 36 years, we Belizeans have lived in harmony with one another and with nature. Together with our leaders and with the support of other friendly nations, we have built a strong nation by the sweat of our brows. We have honoured our Constitution, which enshrines the principle of social, economic and environmental justice for all. We will persevere in our efforts to achieve our just objectives and look to the United Nations for its continued support. In turn, the United Nations and every Member State can rest assured that Belize will defend our community of nations and its purposes and principles. Our national motto is "*Sub umbra floreo*" — "In the shade I flourish". In the shade of the United Nations, we shall all flourish.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Nicola Renzi, Minister for Foreign and Political Affairs and Justice of the Republic of San Marino.

Mr. Renzi (San Marino) (*spoke in Italian. English text provided by the delegation*): On behalf of the Government of the Republic of San Marino, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election

as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to wish you a successful term. Your experience as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovakia and your deep knowledge of international affairs are invaluable resources for the United Nations. The San Marino delegation assures you of its utmost willingness to work with you in the course of this session of the General Assembly.

My country would also like to offer its heartfelt congratulations to His Excellency Mr. António Guterres as he embarks on fulfilling his new mandate as Secretary-General. We thank him for the energy and determination he has already shown in his first months of activity at the helm of the Organization.

I am grateful for the theme chosen for this session — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet" — where issues that the Republic of San Marino holds dear, such as human rights, peace and sustainable development, are at the heart of the agenda. It is a cross-cutting theme, since upholding human rights is reflected in every action the United Nations takes in the service of peace, security, justice and sustainable development. In the coming years, the international community will have to do all it can to achieve these objectives.

To our dismay, in every situation of armed conflict we are witnessing the systematic violation of human rights. Refugees and migrants are subject to discrimination, various forms of abuse and trafficking. Racial and religious discrimination and intolerance persist in many parts of the world. Inequality and social exclusion are at the root of the numerous and increasingly complex challenges that the United Nations is called upon to address. Unfortunately, in recent years we have seen an increase in inequality and marginalization, not only in developing countries but even in the richest ones, where increasingly large sections of the population struggle against growing poverty. This is a threat to global stability, as it leads to an erosion of confidence in national and multilateral institutions and fuels nationalist and populist movements. Collective commitment to human rights is therefore essential.

The relationship between peace, security and respect for human rights is undeniable. Measures for the protection and promotion of human rights are essential to preventing conflicts and ensuring peace. Moreover, peace and sustainable development are complementary concepts. More inclusive and peaceful societies provide

better conditions for sustainable development, and vice versa.

The complexity of the challenges that the United Nations must tackle today is unparalleled in the history of the Organization. Their interconnected nature reminds us that countries must act together to be more effective in the fight against climate change, global terrorism and poverty and to build more inclusive, safe and just societies for all. As the Secretary-General stated in his report on the work of the Organization (A/72/1), it is important to rekindle faith in multilateralism and, in particular, in the United Nations. Our country has always believed in the power of dialogue and respect for others, which are values that underpin the peaceful coexistence among peoples.

The profoundly egalitarian nature and unquestioned legitimacy of the United Nations, together with the universal character of participation in it, unequivocally reaffirm its value and central role as a forum for solving global problems. The various religious and cultural traditions present in the Organization should be not an obstacle but rather a valuable resource for achieving global solutions through mediating and synthesizing diversities.

The United Nations must adapt quickly to new global challenges and to the new opportunities offered by an increasingly interconnected world so that it can be effective in carrying out its mandate. Reform is therefore crucial to future stability in the world and to the maintenance of international peace and security, which must remain at the centre of our actions. We reject any diminution of the role of the United Nations just because a universal agreement on the reforms needed to improve its functioning cannot be found.

The Republic of San Marino is attentively following the revitalization process of the General Assembly, which must continue to be a meeting point and forum for the exchange of ideas and discussion, leading to solutions rooted in a strong consensus. Similarly, Security Council reform should be an objective of all Member States. As we have stated on previous occasions, we believe that intergovernmental negotiations contribute to agreements that reflect a broad and strong political consensus representing the interests of all negotiating groups.

San Marino calls for reform that can make the Security Council more democratic, transparent, efficient and accountable. This goal can be achieved

only through continuous dialogue among States, with the understanding that it is essential to go beyond initial positions if the broadest agreements possible are to be achieved. The Republic of San Marino supports the Secretary-General's reform agenda, which features streamlining procedures, decentralizing decision-making processes and achieving greater transparency and accountability.

Human rights are the *raison d'être* of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The Agenda defines our future and a vision of a peaceful, inclusive and safe society where the burden of poverty has been eradicated, prosperity is shared and decent work is available to all. Together with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, it also reflects the ambition and commitment of Member States to reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 2020, giving our planet and its inhabitants the chance to live longer and in better conditions. The 2030 Agenda is ambitious because it is universal: it integrates the three dimensions of sustainable development — social, economic and environmental — and is applicable to all States.

A year after the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, their effective implementation is the real challenge of today. In many areas covered by the 2030 Agenda, progress has unfortunately not been in line with hopes. For example, much more needs to be done for the 700 million people living in extreme poverty and experiencing malnutrition. More targeted actions should be implemented to reduce maternal mortality and gender inequality, ensure inclusive and equitable educational systems, invest in sustainable energy and provide health care to wider segments of the population. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda is the responsibility of individual States, which should keep their promises by incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals into their development legislation and policies.

A cultural revolution must be part of our policies in the coming years. In the Republic of San Marino, for instance, we have promoted education initiatives on sustainable development in various sectors, including education, construction, waste disposal and public transport. As a complement to national Governments, civil society and the private sector also play important roles in mobilizing the resources needed for the implementation of the Agenda. In this regard, San Marino recalls the important results achieved following

the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which identified various concrete measures that could be taken to finance development and laid the foundation for the global programme contained in the 2030 Agenda.

The 2030 Agenda states that the rights of the most vulnerable people must be promoted and protected. The Republic of San Marino has always paid special attention to the most vulnerable groups — women, children, the elderly and the disabled. San Marino, which was among the first countries to become signatories to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, intends to fully implement that Convention by adopting legislative frameworks and policies that favour the inclusion and full participation of people with disabilities in the employment, social and cultural contexts of the country.

Gender equality must be a goal of the international community. Unfortunately, women are still victims of discrimination and violence in many parts of the world, including in the most developed countries. In support of the initiatives promoted by the Secretary-General, San Marino has signed the voluntary compact on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping missions. We believe that the rights and dignity of the victims of sexual abuse should be at the heart of our collective efforts.

Children are sadly the most vulnerable group of all and can be victims of violence, abuse and exploitation. Protecting their rights must be at the heart of our actions. San Marino supports the Ministerial Declaration made at this year's High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which reaffirms the commitment of the international community to children, focusing in particular on eradicating poverty, promoting their participation and eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination.

Refugees and migrants continue to be subject to violent discrimination. The enormous humanitarian challenge posed by large movements of refugees and migrants can be addressed only through greater cooperation and better sharing of responsibilities and costs among all States. The movement-of-peoples phenomenon has reached a level unprecedented in the history of the United Nations. The Republic of San Marino supports the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted in September 2016. It contains a series of bold commitments to addressing the challenges posed by the large flows of migrants and

refugees, but it also provides for developing a plan for the implementation of these commitments.

In addition to dealing with large movements of refugees and migrants, the United Nations has also been called on to address grave and complex humanitarian crises. As the Secretary-General mentioned in his report on the activity of the Organization, approximately 96 million people, in more than 40 countries, more than half of whom were women and children, received humanitarian assistance in 2017. The report shows that in 2016, natural disasters caused the displacement of approximately 31 million people, three times more than those forced to flee because of armed conflicts. An unprecedented food crisis has affected more than 20 million people on the African continent.

The Republic of San Marino has always supported cooperation projects and emergency interventions under the auspices of numerous international organizations, in particular entities within the United Nations family. Our country is grateful to the Secretary-General for the rapid and crucial action he has undertaken for populations facing humanitarian emergencies, as well as to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Central Emergency Response Fund for their rapid response and substantial contribution.

Today, the United Nations is engaged in the widest deployment of peacekeeping operations and special political missions in its history. Recent and ongoing wars have caused great suffering for civilians, unprecedented global humanitarian crises, tragic, massive movements of migrants and refugees, and an increase in terrorism, violent extremism, populism and intolerance.

Despite the negotiations for a political solution in Syria, which resumed in January under the auspices of the United Nations, facilitated by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, to whom the Republic of San Marino gives its full support, the situation remains highly volatile, has led to a massive displacement of civilians and, at the same time, poses a threat to the stability of the entire region.

The Republic of San Marino supports the Secretary-General in his initiative aimed at strengthening prevention activities and conflict mediation. In this regard, my country will participate in the Italian initiative for the creation of a network of women mediators in the Mediterranean area, the purpose of which is to contribute to peace processes through prevention and mediation. By establishing relations

with the various national or regional stakeholders and working to achieve sustainable peace, the United Nations should be able to anticipate the causes of a possible conflict.

More and more frequently, terrorism and violent extremism are generated and fuelled by armed conflicts, exacerbating ethnic, religious, political and economic tensions. Violations of human rights by such terrorist groups as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Al-Qaida and Boko Haram are very serious and include murder, kidnapping, forced conversion, human trafficking, slavery, sexual abuse, and the destruction of places of religious or cultural significance for ethnic and religious minorities.

The self-proclaimed Islamic State and its associated forces have also been responsible for numerous deadly terrorist attacks in Europe, Asia and Africa. The international community and the United Nations must act so that those responsible for those heinous crimes are brought to justice. San Marino supports the activities and initiatives of the United Nations in promoting justice and the rule of law, which form an integral part of the agenda to promote and protect human rights.

My country welcomes the actions taken by the Secretary-General, with the support of the General Assembly, to establish the Office of Counter-Terrorism, headed by an Under-Secretary-General, with a view to enhancing coherence in United Nations action and provide better assistance to Member States in their own fight against terrorism.

Disarmament activity plays a crucial role in maintaining international peace and security. The recent tests carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the context of a nuclear-weapons programme threaten security globally as well as regionally and underline the need for robust disarmament and non-proliferation policies. San Marino strongly condemns the launching of missiles by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and demands that it cease such activity. We also call for the sanctions set forth in recent Security Council resolutions to be fully implemented by all States.

The Republic of San Marino took part in the negotiations that led to the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons last July. The Treaty is an important step in efforts aimed at achieving the shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

In order to address today's many and complex challenges, the United Nations must be more effective and flexible. Member States must assume their responsibilities in that regard, including that of helping our Organization live up to its mandate, which is to protect the citizens of the world.

Thanks to its centuries-long history of peace and freedom, San Marino is a State with a strong identity. Although our State is small, it is proud to make its contribution to the United Nations community. Everything we do is aimed at restoring the capacity and authority of the United Nations, so that it can continue to be the indispensable reference point of the international community.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Aurelia Frick, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for Education and Minister for Cultural Affairs of the Principality of Liechtenstein.

Ms. Frick (Liechtenstein): Mr. President, it is good to see you presiding over this session of the General Assembly. We know that we are in very able hands, and I look forward to working closely with you. We also salute the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his leadership. I am confident that he will chart an intelligent course for us to make the changes we wish to see in the United Nations.

Mr. President, you have proposed for this session the theme "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", which takes us back to the very beginning of the Charter of the United Nations, written on behalf of the peoples of the world. To this day, the United Nations symbolizes great hope around the globe — hope for peace, hope for justice and hope for a life of dignity and decency, which represent the basic ambition of every human being. Yet fulfilling these hopes remains elusive for millions, and for millions of others those hopes have been shattered.

Intolerance and nationalism were the drivers of the Second World War, and the Organization was founded in response to them. It is a place where we seek solutions together, instead of pursuing nationalist agendas. Only by embracing this understanding will we be able to achieve the best results at the United Nations. The horrors of armed conflict — the tragedy of the Second World War in particular — led the founding nations to pledge to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. We have made a collective commitment to removing threats to peace and to suppressing acts of

aggression. But today we often manage and contain armed conflict rather than preventing it in the first place. We must do better.

This year we have the opportunity to take a historic step forward. For the first time since the creation of the United Nations, we can give an international tribunal jurisdiction over the crime of aggression. The most serious forms of the illegal use of force will be punishable. The tribunal in charge — and the centrepiece of our common fight for accountability — will be the International Criminal Court (ICC). I appeal to those assembled here today to live up to the commitment we made when we signed onto the United Nations Charter. Let us enforce the prohibition of the illegal use of force by making it punishable in the highest court of criminal law we have.

Next year, we will celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the ICC. With jurisdiction over the most serious violations of international law, the establishment of the Court was an enormous achievement, but, today, it still lacks universality. There remains therefore a significant impunity gap. A very large number of people in the world do not benefit from its legal protection.

These people must not be left without hope. They too deserve real prospects for justice. The people of Syria, for example, have suffered unspeakable violence. The crimes committed against them have been atrocious. And the silence with which we met those atrocities for so long puts us all to shame. But finally, late last year, we came together to create a real possibility for justice — the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of those Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, the accountability mechanism established by the General Assembly in resolution 71/248. The Mechanism itself will not conduct criminal proceedings against perpetrators. But it could be critically important in the preparation of case files for prosecution in courts with jurisdiction. This is a decisive step forward. A key to the Mechanism's success will be strong support from us, the States Members of the United Nations — politically, by insisting on the importance of justice as part of political solutions; financially, by providing sustainable funding; and substantively, by sharing information and evidence of crimes that are in our possession.

Accountability for the worst crimes imaginable, whether committed in Syria or elsewhere, is essential. But the truth is that there is no remedy and no compensation for these crimes. Prevention is the only effective form of protection. We look in particular to the Security Council for leadership. I thank the 113 States that have joined us in supporting the code of conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Together, we represent a strong majority of States expecting effective action from the Council aimed at ending and preventing such crimes. This pledge could not come at a better moment. The Secretary-General has made prevention a key priority in his agenda, and applying the Code of Conduct works best when there is productive interplay between him and the Security Council.

Never before have the needs for humanitarian assistance been as great as they are today. And never before have we seen such a significant shortfall in our response. The so-called forgotten crises are those that may need our attention the most. Yet our collective attention span barely does justice to even the most visible of emergencies.

Armed conflict remains a key driver of displacement, human suffering and instability. But there are numerous other factors that make people leave their homes. Today, unprecedented numbers of people are on the move across the globe. Across the backdrop of history, there have been various periods of mass migration and there is ample evidence that migration has been a positive and enriching factor for receiving societies. But mass movements of people and irregular migration in particular also tend to create anxiety and fear. Taking these reactions seriously is crucial to overcoming them.

My son, Leonard, entered kindergarten last year. Two children in his group are refugees from Syria. As a mother, I reflected on how this might influence him and his development. What happened was that he quickly learned a few words in Arabic and he knows what a Syrian birthday cake tastes like. He also understands now that there are kids who spend every single night thinking that their house might be bombed.

We place high hopes in the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration that we will adopt together next year. I echo the call of the Secretary-General: migration must be an option, not a necessity. Irregular migrants are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Human trafficking and modern

slavery are perhaps the greatest human rights scandal of our time. They are also a global phenomenon and they particularly thrive in circumstances that create high levels of vulnerability. As is the case so often, women and girls are disproportionately affected. Many decades ago, we agreed on the abolition of slavery in all its forms. The relevant legal norm requires universal application. And yet the reality is that there is a disturbing level of impunity for the commission of these acts.

We must no longer accept this paradox. Human trafficking and modern slavery are not just crimes, they are also a profitable form of organized crime. We therefore see great potential here in applying the tools developed to combat other forms of organized crime. Following the money can lead us to the perpetrators of these crimes. In this regard, Liechtenstein is prepared to share the expertise it has acquired as a financial centre committed to international standards of transparency and accountability.

The people whom we serve look to us to reduce risks and defuse tensions. Yet the world is spiralling towards a new arms race. We are facing increased risks of self-destruction, including the unspeakable horror of the use of nuclear weapons. Most of us remember the shocking pictures of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 from our history books. The United Nations was built on the ashes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and on the promise of "never again", but, owing to collective complacency, we have not delivered on that promise.

This week we have changed course for the better with the signing of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Without any doubt, it will take time to see the Treaty's effects on nuclear stockpiles. Nevertheless, setting a number of important legal benchmarks that will become binding norms is great progress. Nuclear weapons are prohibited and should be eliminated. Their use can never be justified. The suffering that they cause runs counter to fundamental principles of humanity, the basic tenets of international humanitarian law and the dictates of public conscience. On Wednesday, I signed the Treaty on behalf of Liechtenstein as one of 50 signatory States. Together we extend a hand to those who so far have chosen to stand apart. We need their commitment to succeed in finally ridding the world of nuclear weapons.

I have had the privilege to address the General Assembly eight times. On each of those occasions,

I have talked about a particular aspect of the work of the United Nations that is of special significance to me — full gender equality. The progress made in the past few decades has significantly slowed, both internationally and back home. That is a disturbing trend. Commitments have gone unfulfilled and strategies have turned out to be little more than empty promises. The achievements that nobody questioned 20 years ago are now under attack. The level of political participation has decreased, and the statistics on gender pay gaps are still shocking. Yet I remain not only committed but optimistic, simply because I strongly believe that many of our common goals will become achievable only if we indeed achieve gender equality. In the Sustainable Development Goals, the domestic and the international come together. If there is one area in which the United Nations must show the way, this is certainly it.

The work of the United Nations can seem abstract. Explaining its relevance to our citizens at home and to our children can be a challenge. There are topics that make that task much easier, however; for example, climate change. Everyone understands what is at stake in that discussion. If we cannot live on our planet, no one will prosper, irrespective of nationality, gender or economic wealth. And no country, large or small, can tackle the problem on its own. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change does not end the threat of climate change, but it is our only realistic hope for addressing the issue together. I therefore experienced great satisfaction when I deposited Liechtenstein's instrument of ratification earlier this week. Indeed, it is something I will be proud to share with my children.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Nikos Kotzias, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic.

Mr. Kotzias (Greece) (*spoke in Greek; English text provided by the delegation*): First of all, I would like to wish every success to the new Secretary-General, Mr. Guterres, and reaffirm our full support for his work.

Allow me also to congratulate you, Sir, on both your election to the office of President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and on the choice of this year's main theme.

Our world is changing rapidly today. We are going through a second era of machines — an era in which machines are no longer an extension of physical strength but provide spiritual wealth and knowledge. Although

today they are faster and smaller, they have an immense impact on our daily lives, affecting the way we work, produce, communicate and interact. This new trend could be described as the fourth Industrial Revolution. It brings with it innovations and advantages, as well as challenges, especially for States. These challenges must be addressed in an effective manner if we are to survive in the complex international reality of today.

States have to show resilience and meet the needs of their peoples in terms of human rights, communication, growth and innovation. They have to evolve, but this evolution must be linked to that of the Organization. Will the United Nations be able to keep pace with these developments and adapt to new, emerging realities? In the light of this double adaptation, this is an extremely critical time. It will require reforms that can enable the United Nations to remain relevant in an ever-changing world that is very different from the one that existed in 1945. If the United Nations is to retain its ability to fulfil its mandate, it must evolve to meet the challenges before us.

As insecurity and instability abound over large swathes of the globe, Greece is formulating a multidimensional foreign policy with a view to actively contributing to the attainment of peace through concrete proposals in international forums and regional organizations and the promotion of stability through political initiatives. More specifically, we favour the prospect of broadening the agenda that the institutionalized dialogue and cooperation between the European Union and the United Nations is addressing on an already wide array of issues of global concern.

In line with our shared vision, we all want to see a world free of weapons of mass destruction. In that context, we firmly condemn North Korea's ongoing illegal nuclear-weapon and ballistic-missile programmes, including its most recent test, which seriously endanger regional and international peace and security. Considering the developments in disarmament and non-proliferation that we have seen over the past year, I believe that it is now more imperative than ever to seek avenues of dialogue with the participation of nuclear-weapon States. That could be a way to bridge the gap between the step-by-step approach to nuclear disarmament and a non-verifiable immediate and total ban.

While it is situated close to regions that are extremely turbulent, such as the Middle East and parts

of North Africa, Greece continues to be a pillar of stability. In that context, we have recently undertaken many initiatives, such as the Rhodes Conference for Security and Stability and the International Conference on Religious and Cultural Pluralism and Peaceful Coexistence in the Middle East, held in Athens, as well as the recently established Ancient Civilizations Forum, whose latest meeting took place here in New York only yesterday. The Rhodes Conference focuses on a positive agenda of cooperation among 20 European and Arab countries in the Eastern Mediterranean, with the aim of fostering stability and security in the region.

I would also like to mention that, together with Cyprus, in a context of promoting peace and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean, we have established a number of trilateral forms of cooperation that include Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine. Our main objective is to develop a positive and multidimensional agenda for cooperation in international affairs, with a focus on synergies and joint activities, especially through culture, as one of the main drivers of soft power in international relations, and in other areas of cooperation such as trade, education and research.

Enhancing regional cooperation in the Balkans is also the basic principle behind the Greek initiative of quadrilateral meetings launched in Thessaloniki in April 2016 between the Foreign Ministers of Greece, Albania, Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. At their forthcoming meeting in October, with a view to developing an effective response to the refugee crisis that is in line with European democratic values and principles, the four countries will focus on identifying ways for improving their interaction on issues such as return operations, the exchange of information and tackling smuggling, human trafficking, terrorism and organized crime and energy networks.

The Syrian war has taken a terrible toll in human lives and has displaced millions. A cessation of hostilities is essential to ensuring progress in the political negotiations. Greece sees no alternative to a political solution to the crisis, and we fully support an inclusive political dialogue in Geneva under United Nations auspices.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains a constant threat to regional stability and security, and the current situation on the ground is not sustainable. We support a two-State solution, meaning the establishment of a sovereign and independent State of Palestine living in

peace and security alongside the State of Israel, while at the same time ensuring that Israel's long-standing quest for security is satisfied.

With regard to Libya, Greece considers the international efforts to stabilize the country to be crucial. We firmly believe that there can be no military solution to the crisis in that country and support every effort to achieve peace and security there.

Terrorism remains one of the major global challenges we face, and the significant progress we have seen recently in the fight against Da'esh deserves special mention. Strengthening international cooperation among all the relevant actors and improving the exchange of information constitute key elements in tackling the flows of foreign fighters. At the same time, we must address the root causes of violent extremism. Greece is actively involved in our shared fight against terrorism. In the context of the work of preventing terrorists from exploiting resources for their activities, we particularly support international efforts aimed at promoting concerted international action against the illegal trade in antiquities and cultural artefacts.

We consistently pursue friendly relations and enhanced cooperation with all our neighbours with a view to promoting stability and prosperity for all. In the Western Balkans, Greece remains a firm supporter of the European Union's enlargement policy. The rise of nationalistic rhetoric in the region is very worrying, however. We want to underline that actions and statements that undermine good-neighbourly relations should be avoided at all costs.

We should also emphasize that we maintain a friendly approach to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Greece's initiative aimed at designing and implementing bilateral confidence-building measures has strengthened relations between us and facilitated efforts to address more sensitive matters, such as the ongoing issue of our neighbour's name. In that respect, Greece will continue its systematic efforts to reach a mutually acceptable solution to the issue of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's name. Our position is clear — the name must be mutually acceptable.

Where Greek-Turkish relations are concerned, we believe they can be built only on a basis of full respect for international law, including the international law of the sea. We have repeatedly pointed out that good-neighbourly relations are not served by a neighbour

that persistently challenges Greece's sovereignty and sovereign rights.

With regard to the Cyprus issue, our objective is summed up in the concept outlined by the Secretary-General at the international Conference on Cyprus — which is to make Cyprus a so-called normal State, one that is sovereign, independent and free of foreign-occupation troops, external guarantees and rights to intervention. Unfortunately, the July Conference on Cyprus in Switzerland ended without an agreement being reached, because the Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot sides were the only parties at the Conference that did not share the goal of the normal-State concept. Greece is prepared to continue discussing the key international issue of security and guarantees as soon as Turkey demonstrates clear willingness to resume negotiations on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions, as well as within the framework of the parameters outlined by the Secretary-General in Crans-Montana.

In the area of civil and political rights, we actively support the fight against racism and all forms of discrimination, whether on religious, gender, sexual or any other grounds. In that regard, Greece, with the aim of prioritizing the safety of journalists and media workers, especially in conflict areas, will submit a relevant thematic draft resolution in the Third Committee at the current session. In the framework of the Human Rights Council, my country has also spearheaded an initiative with its successful submission of a draft for Human Rights Council resolution 35/28, on the convening of the Social Forum in 2018 in order to focus on the promotion of human rights through sport and the Olympic ideal.

Mrs. Pobe (Ghana), Vice-President, took the Chair.

My country remains committed to the protection of human rights in all policies that address large movements of migrants, with particular attention to the needs of migrants, including children, in vulnerable situations. We also believe that implementing that framework correctly is more important than ever if we are to protect those who need it, combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling and return those not entitled to international protection to their homes, while at the same time tackling the root causes of migration through effective cooperation with countries of origin and transit. Finally, the issue of ensuring the social and economic inclusion of legal migrants is equally important and deserves our full attention. Greece has

reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring the full and effective implementation of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and its annexes, adopted by the Assembly at its seventy-first session. We also emphasize our commitment to working in the context of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration to be concluded by 2018.

I would like to assure the Assembly that, as a founding Member of the Organization, Greece will lend it its unfailing support as the United Nations works to rise to the task of creating a more peaceful and prosperous future, with justice and solidarity for all, especially for generations to come.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Maxine Pamela Ometa McClean, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados.

Ms. McClean (Barbados): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to congratulate the President on his election to lead the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to assure him that he has the full support and cooperation of the Barbados delegation as he undertakes his important duties. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend his predecessor in the presidency, Mr. Peter Thomson, for his able leadership of the Assembly during the seventy-first session. He has been a worthy exemplar of the valuable contribution that small island developing States (SIDS) can make to international organizations, and we are pleased that he will continue to serve the international community.

The theme of this year's general debate, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", is a reminder of the purposes and principles that the Organization has embraced from its inception and that are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. It brings into sharp focus our responsibility to pursue the best interests of the people who occupy planet Earth. For if we fail to advance the causes of security, sustainable development and human rights together, none of them will succeed.

I stand before this organ for the eighth time. On each occasion that I have addressed the nations gathered here, I have issued a caution about the ramifications of unchecked climate change and highlighted the existential threat facing vulnerable small island developing States such as Barbados. In his first address to the General Assembly, in 2008 (see A/63/PV.12), the then Prime Minister of Barbados, the late David Thompson, described the Caribbean as a region at the epicentre

of the global climate crisis. Citing scientific evidence and the devastating effects of climate change that were already evident in the region, he told the Assembly that failure to take urgent, ambitious and decisive action would be nothing short of reckless indifference.

Seven years later, the current Prime Minister of Barbados, Mr. Freundel Stuart, reminded the world that

"none of the nations represented in this Assembly will enjoy sustainable prosperity if we continue to abuse the environment that we hold in sacred trust for future generations. [...] The very existence of small island States like those in the Caribbean and the Pacific could be imperilled if current trends are not halted or reversed." (*A/66/PV.22, p. 45*)

Many leaders from small island developing States have also consistently warned of the inherent danger of inaction, or insufficient action, to reduce global emissions. Such failures to act imperil lives, livelihoods and the very existence of sovereign States. Year after year, our leaders have warned of the escalating costs of responding to the effects of climate change and of the fact that decades of development gains could easily be washed away in a few hours by an extreme weather event. We have also endured the persistent and frustrating challenge of gaining access to the resources we need to strengthen our resilience and protect our peoples from the ravages of climate change. That is of course owing to a narrow focus on per capita income on the part of donors and international development banks and agencies.

The clarion call from the Caribbean has been ignored, and today we are witnessing the results of that reckless indifference. I regret the fact that I must today report not merely the potential threat that climate change poses to the globe, but rather its destructive impact. I am referring in particular to the utter devastation that we are seeing in several small island developing States in the Caribbean that have been overwhelmed by an unprecedented wave of hurricanes. On Saturday, 16 September, when I arrived in New York, the people of Antigua and Barbuda and of the Caribbean were working feverishly to restore some semblance of order to the islands shattered by Irma, the ninth named hurricane of the 2017 season. A mere two days later, in the early hours of Monday, I read with horror the pleas of the Prime Minister of Dominica when he reached out to the world to share the trauma he was experiencing as his small island was ravaged by the brutal force of

nature from the eleventh hurricane in a season that has not yet ended. By the grace of God, Barbados has so far been spared, but we in the Caribbean are one family. We are brothers and sisters, and when one of us is hurting we all feel the pain.

For much of the Caribbean, tourism is the major economic sector, and it has been built on the premise of providing the world with a zone of peace and health. The threat of disease must be avoided. One possible consequence of the recent floods and serious infrastructural damage in the region is the outbreak of disease. Our ability to detect and respond to such biological threats must be strengthened. There must be bilateral and multilateral cooperation in order to minimize and eliminate such threats, and a focus on biosecurity must be part of our response. There must be attention paid to a global health security agenda. For Barbados, as an island State, the ocean is a priority. Ocean governance and the promotion and conservation of marine resources therefore represent one of our primary concerns.

The road to recovery and reconstruction for Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica and the other islands affected by this devastating hurricane season will be long and difficult. I take comfort in the spirit, will and determination of the Caribbean people. We are down but not defeated. Our neighbours in the Caribbean affected by the recent hurricanes can be assured of the full and unconditional support and solidarity of the Government and the people of Barbados. However, our friends in the international community must support the Caribbean region on its journey to rebuild the affected islands. We are all morally obligated to do so. In that regard, I call on the President of the World Bank and on the Secretary-General to convene an international pledging conference on the recovery and reconstruction of the Caribbean islands affected by Hurricanes Irma and Maria. I urge all Member States to support the recovery and rebuilding of the Caribbean.

For Barbados and other SIDS, whether in the Caribbean, the Pacific, Asia or Africa, climate change is a matter of life and death. It is not an issue for sterile debates and endless meetings. For our people, it is about the loss of life and livelihood. For our economies, heavily dependent on tourism, it is about a cycle of constant recovery and rebuilding, which is a serious impediment to sustainable development. Barbados remains committed to ambitious action on climate change. We continue to support the implementation of

the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and we view the Secretary-General's proposal for a climate summit in 2019 as an important opportunity to take stock and give additional impetus where necessary. Barbados's support for global action on climate change is one part of its overall policy of promoting and protecting the environment. We have taken concrete steps towards building a resource-efficient green economy that is integrated into our national framework for sustainable development.

Barbados would like to take this opportunity to convey its solidarity with the Government and the people of Mexico, who are suffering the painful effects of two deadly earthquakes in quick succession.

A key element of this year's theme is striving for peace. Barbados is a democratic, peace-loving nation. Last year my country celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its independence, which was gained through negotiation and mutual agreement. We cherish and nurture our political and social stability, based on our history of more than 375 years of unbroken parliamentary Government. We believe that peace is an indispensable prerequisite for sustainable human, social and economic development. For us, it is an essential pillar that supports the national mission of the Government of Barbados, which is based on achieving sustainable economic and social development for the nation, protecting the environment, maintaining good governance and strengthening our citizens' security. We are committed to inclusive development as a means of achieving lasting peace and stability at the national and international levels.

We regret that there can be no peace of mind for the people of the Caribbean who must rebuild their lives and livelihoods. But the mission of the United Nations is to secure global peace. We were reminded by the Secretary-General at the very start of our deliberations that "[w]e are a world in pieces. We need to be a world at peace" (see A/72/PV.3). Each and every member of the international community has an obligation to support efforts and take action to create an environment in which peace can flourish. The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have declared the Caribbean as a zone of peace. I take this opportunity to express Barbados's unwavering support to the protection and preservation of the territorial integrity of our Caribbean Community sister countries Guyana and Belize.

Barbados joins other States Members of the United Nations in the effort to collectively address the many other diverse challenges to which the international community must find and implement solutions. In the past few years, the countries represented here have made historic international commitments, including the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Climate Change Agreement. As an international community, we must now take action to implement those commitments if the destruction I discussed earlier in my statement is to be addressed.

In recognition of the fact that our citizens are our most precious resource, we have been resolute in taking a path of development that is people-centred. Our national policy framework aligns naturally with the philosophy guiding the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and that has facilitated our implementation efforts. The Prime Minister of Barbados has clearly emphasized the priority that Barbados accords the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including by appointing a permanent secretary in his office with a mandate and special responsibility to lead the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the national level.

Barbados has been a consistent and vocal advocate for the treatment of SIDS as a special case for sustainable development because of their inherent natural vulnerabilities. There is a pressing need for the international community to address the specific needs and interests of SIDS in a holistic manner. They will also need effective multisectoral partnerships to assist them in implementing the SDGs.

Barbados welcomes the ongoing efforts of the United Nations to focus international attention on challenges to our oceans and on encouraging the international community to take meaningful steps to protect the marine environment. I was pleased to head the Barbados delegation to the Ocean Conference in June, and I am committed to ensuring our continued active participation on the issue. Barbados is interested in working with United Nations agencies and other international partners to develop an ocean economy trade strategy, as well as effective systems for managing our fish stocks.

Barbados has built an enviable record on the basis of its promotion of social development. Since our independence, successive Administrations have committed to targeted social policies focused on the

people of Barbados. Substantial investment has been made in sectors such as education and health in order to develop a skilled, healthy and productive population. The result of that investment has been a significant improvement in Barbadians' quality of life over the years, borne out in the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index and other indices that focus on transparency, corruption, gender balance and human rights, among other things.

Promoting and protecting the human rights of all Barbadians are primary concerns for the Government of Barbados. That is in keeping with our commitment to a human rights-based approach to development and our adherence to the principles of good governance and the rule of law, as well as to ensuring that our people have the highest levels of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. We pay special attention to the rights of the vulnerable, including children, women and persons with disabilities. With regard to the rights of persons with disabilities, my Government, together with civil society, continues to make progress in promoting their full integration into mainstream society. Barbados wishes to participate more fully in the activities of the international community on issues of inclusiveness, and are therefore pleased to present Ms. Kerryann Ifill as a candidate for membership of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for the 2019-2022 term. Senator Ifill is the youngest President of the Senate ever appointed in Barbados, the first female and the first person with a disability ever to hold that office, and her candidature has been endorsed by the Caribbean Community.

The Caribbean Community has been at the forefront of United Nations initiatives to address the problem of non-communicable diseases. During this session, Barbados will work with regional and other partners to bring a greater focus to the growing challenge of childhood obesity, a serious problem that could become the next major development challenge. Barbados looks forward to the convening of the General Assembly's third high-level meeting on non-communicable diseases, scheduled for next year. I encourage Member States to participate actively in it, as it will be an invaluable opportunity to strengthen our action on this important issue and move closer to our goal of improved health for our peoples.

Barbados would like to take this opportunity to once again express its deep concern about the possibility of its being penalized for any success that it may

achieve in its development efforts. Our categorization as a middle-income country, with the concomitant restrictions on our access to international development assistance and concessionary financing, is unfair and does nothing to advance the cause of sustainable development. We reiterate our call to the international community to create an enabling global environment and partnership for development. Countries such as mine require assistance in building economic resilience; we do not need challenges such as those presented by de-risking, blacklisting and indebtedness.

Transnational crime is a major threat to international peace and security. It can take many forms — trafficking in illegal drugs, trafficking in persons, the illegal transfer of small arms and light weapons, and money-laundering. All present significant threats to our security, and Barbados reiterates its commitment to protecting the security of its people. We will remain actively engaged in cooperative mechanisms aimed at confronting and addressing such challenges.

Barbados welcomes the convening of the third Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). We encourage all States parties to take action to implement the Treaty and we further acknowledge the nexus between the ATT and the Sustainable Development Goals, and their contribution to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies.

The long-standing economic embargo on Cuba continues to be a cause for serious concern on Barbados's part. We join the overwhelming majority of States Members of the United Nations in opposing that unilateral action and encourage constructive engagement between the two sides.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize Barbados's unwavering commitment to the United Nations and the principle of multilateralism. If we are truly committed to a decent life for all, people everywhere must be heard, including those in small States such as Barbados. We agree that there is need for reform in the United Nations system. However, even as the United Nations is working to reform, and thereby better equip itself to respond to today's global challenges, due care must be taken to ensure that the process is inclusive and transparent. No Member State, particularly the most vulnerable, should be excluded in the restructuring process. Barbados supports the view that a spirit of cooperation and dialogue should be the foundation for our interaction at the multilateral level. Cooperation

and dialogue represent the best means of achieving our international goals and objectives.

The Acting President: I now call on His Highness Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates.

Sheikh Al Nahyan (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by congratulating the President on his leadership of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We are confident that his deep experience in international affairs will contribute to the Assembly's success, and we stand ready to provide him with all the support and cooperation he may need. I would also like to thank his predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, for his stewardship of the previous session.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my country's appreciation for the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General to reform the work of the United Nations in conflict prevention and the achievement of peace and security. We fully support his vision, which requires the international community to cooperate more closely on existing and emerging global challenges.

The foreign policy of the United Arab Emirates is guided by principles consistent with the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of international law — a spirit of partnership, support for the rule of law, good neighbourliness and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States. They lead us to support a stronger role for the United Nations, along with reform of its entities and systems, so that it can fulfil its mandate to maintain international peace and security and help countries achieve development and prosperity.

The United Arab Emirates works hard and responsibly within its region and beyond to promote the stability and development of Arab countries and tackle the destruction wrought in our region by wars that have left total devastation in their wake. We see security and stability as key to the advancement of nations and peoples, a promising future for younger generations and a decent life for all. Our collective priority must be to promote peace and stability.

Despite serious regional and international efforts, our region continues to suffer from crises whose causes include extremism and terrorism, persistent interference by States in one another's internal affairs, aggressive and expansionist policies driven by hegemonic ambitions, and regimes that seek influence

by providing support to extremist and terrorist groups, with the goal of undermining Governments' legitimacy. We must protect that legitimacy and prevent the spread of chaos and conflict throughout the region and the world. These crises have had enormous costs in terms of human life, the displacement of millions and the destruction of infrastructure. If the situation persists, it will generate only more violence and devastation and deplete economic and cultural resources, not just in our region but all over the world. There is no doubt that we as an international community have achieved great progress in confronting security and humanitarian threats, but more can be done to restore stability in the Arab world. The United Arab Emirates therefore believes that we should take the following initial steps in the region.

First, we should safeguard the progress that has already been made on development and counter any hindrances to our collective peacebuilding efforts, or we will be reduced solely to managing conflicts. That applies particularly to Libya, Syria, Yemen and Somalia, countries where comprehensive political solutions are possible and stability can be restored. But that can be achieved only if we end external interference in Arab affairs and suppress all forms of support to extremist and terrorist groups. In that regard, we support United Nations efforts to bring the parties to those conflicts to the negotiating table and to achieve comprehensive political solutions to the crises in our region.

Secondly, we must unite in firm and wholehearted rejection of extremism and terrorism in all their manifestations. That is the only way to confront and eradicate those scourges. We believe that the Arab-Islamic-American summit in Riyadh was historic by any standard. It attracted an unprecedented level of attendance at the highest levels, including the important participation of the President of the United States. Its outcome demonstrated that the Arab and Islamic world has taken a firm stand against the ideological roots of terrorism. We believe that, while eliminating this threat from our Arab region is a difficult task, the campaigns to liberate such ancient and storied Arab cities as Mosul in Iraq and Mukalla in Yemen from the grip of terrorist organizations have shown that we can achieve a great deal if we work together in combating extremism and terrorism.

Thirdly, we must take collective action to identify countries that support and finance terrorism and hold them accountable. That is why the United Arab

Emirates, together with its close allies the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Arab Republic of Egypt, has taken measures aimed at stopping Qatar's support for extremism and terrorism and forcing it to abandon policies that have destabilized the region. We are committed to protecting our national interests, the security of the Arabian Gulf and the stability of our region. The alliances between certain parties in our region with organizations or entities whose goal is to undermine peace and security in the Arab region and the world are unacceptable. That is a gamble in which we will all be losers. Let us stand united against those who finance, promote and justify extremism and terrorism. We have a clear choice, and there is no alternative to combating terrorism in all its manifestations and facing down all its perpetrators, without exception. We must have zero tolerance for those who spread violence, fear and destruction among innocent people or provide support and safe havens to terrorist groups. Together with its friends in the region, my country has therefore taken sovereign measures, in line with international law, with a view to protecting Arab security and standing against Qatar's support to terrorism.

Fourthly, we must promote compassion, tolerance and inclusion, because today more than ever the Arab region needs those values in order to counter the misleading messages and ideologies spread by extremists and terrorist groups, especially through social media. My country is working with regional and international partners to establish mechanisms that can remind our young people of our shared human values and counter the rhetoric of terrorism. Specifically, the United Arab Emirates has established and hosts specialized institutions such as the Sawab Centre, the Hedayah International Centre of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism and the Muslim Council of Elders, whose purpose is to demonstrate the peaceful nature of our Islamic religion and constitute a forum for promoting peace in Muslim societies. We have learned from experience that we must expose extremism and terrorism and the rhetoric surrounding them in order to defeat them intellectually and provide an alternative narrative based on the principle of peaceful coexistence and tolerance. At the same time, such institutions promote a culture of peaceful coexistence and tolerance. It is regrettable, however, that some countries are funding media platforms that encourage violence, incite hatred and sectarianism and provide a forum for the murderous ideologies of terrorism. History has

repeatedly shown that catastrophic consequences await those who follow such paths.

Our international efforts to achieve peace in our region will not be successful if we fail to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab territory, which has continued for seven decades. The situation makes young people vulnerable to exploitation by terrorist groups that claim that they are fighting only for liberation and to realize their aspirations.

Iran's hostile and expansionist policies continue to be the common factor in all the crises that our region has experienced, and a real obstacle to any concrete progress in resolving them. Iran interferes in the internal affairs of other States and arms and supports terrorist groups such as the Houthis and Hizbullah, as well as groups and cells in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait. Iran has not only blatantly violated the principle of sovereignty but has continued to exploit the crises in the Arab world in order to undermine regional security and incite and fuel conflict. It must realize that only peaceful coexistence, based on mutual respect for sovereignty, is a viable basis for harmonious relations in the region.

From this rostrum, we reaffirm our firm position on the issue of and our legitimate right to sovereignty over the three islands of Greater Tunbs, Lesser Tunbs and Abu Musa, which Iran has occupied in violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. We will not abandon our demand that Iran return the occupied islands to their rightful owners, through voluntary or other peaceful means and in accordance with the resolutions that have been adopted in that regard, together with the rulings of the International Court of Justice.

Two years have passed since the signing of the nuclear agreement with Iran, with no sign of change in its hostile behaviour. It continues to develop its nuclear programme and violates the letter and spirit of the agreement. We therefore support enhanced controls on Iran's nuclear programme and continued assessment of the agreement and its provisions. We view North Korea's similarly provocative behaviour, through its continued development of its nuclear programme and ballistic missiles, as having only one purpose — acquiring further destructive power with which to threaten peace and stability in its region and the rest of the world. Iran and North Korea's aggressive policies are not consistent with their membership in an

international organization whose primary concern is the maintenance of international peace and security.

If we are to restore security in our region and protect our peoples from conflicts and extremism, we must make development, in both its human and strategic dimensions, our top priority. We must create opportunities and hope for younger generations so that they can look forward to a better tomorrow with optimism and confidence. My country is committed to achieving economic and human progress and has contributed to rehabilitation and reconstruction projects in conflict-affected countries in order to enable them to restore security and stability.

We continue our humanitarian approach to alleviating the suffering of refugees. We support refugees internationally and regionally, with a view to protecting them and improving their living conditions by providing humanitarian and development assistance. However, we would like to stress that managing crises by providing such assistance alone is not a sustainable solution if we fail to address their root causes. In that regard, we would like to reiterate the importance of ensuring that the United Nations can arrive at solutions to humanitarian and political crises and address their grave implications, with a particular focus on recent acts of violence and ethnic cleansing such as have been committed in Myanmar against the Rohingya. The United Arab Emirates condemns the violence, displacement and collective punishment that have been visited on the Rohingya and will continue to provide them with assistance in order to reduce their suffering.

In that context, I should also mention the Houthis' obstinate rejection of a political settlement to the crisis and the humanitarian initiatives in Yemen, which is preventing progress from being made on resolving the issue. We will nonetheless continue to work diligently and with determination on the political and humanitarian processes in Yemen, alongside our friends and brothers and under Saudi Arabia's wise leadership, with the goal of addressing the humanitarian and development needs of the Yemeni people, especially women and children, and with a view to restoring stability there.

The United Arab Emirates believes that by looking to the future, promoting human values, working to achieve human development and responding to the aspirations of young people, we can create the foundations for further development and prosperity. My country has moved beyond the stage of establishing its

infrastructure and fulfilling basic needs, including by providing health, nutrition and education services, and has adopted a model based on the principles of good governance and values of tolerance and on its vision for building a contented society. We have also created a safe environment that can enable women and young people to fulfil their dreams and ambitions while engaging in their country's development. As a result, we have been able to pioneer innovations and other groundbreaking achievements and have become a beacon of hope for younger generations throughout the region. We are cognizant that our greatest challenge is to make our development sustainable and prepare ourselves for the post-oil era. That will be vital to our survival.

The United Arab Emirates considers its values and principles to be a human and historic legacy celebrated and passed on by one generation to another. We have therefore declared 2018 the year of Zayed, in memory and recognition of the achievements of the founding father of the United Arab Emirates and with the aim of enshrining his values as we continue his journey to build and advance our nation.

We stand at a historic juncture. On the one hand, we have those who pursue peace, development, modernity and the future, while on the other we have those who have chosen darkness, destruction, sabotage and chaos. In that essential and just confrontation, we must stand united. Our goal must be the eradication of extremism and terrorism and the elimination of the forces that are tearing our region apart. We will then have a clear path towards a brighter future that is full of hope.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Tsend Munkh-Orgil, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia.

Mr. Munkh-Orgil (Mongolia): At the outset, I join previous speakers in expressing our solidarity and sympathy with the Government of Mexico and its people and with the Caribbean countries and the United States, which have all been hit by devastating natural disasters in the past few days. Natural disasters across the globe have become more frequent, and their consequences even more catastrophic. By some calculations, their numbers have quadrupled worldwide since 1970. The need for better national and local readiness, and for stronger regional and international cooperation, is growing. As part of those efforts, Mongolia will host an Asian ministerial conference in July 2018 aimed at

implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction more effectively.

Mongolia has been exposed to multiple environmental challenges as a result of climate change, including desertification, drought, land degradation and wild forest fires. The main goals of the Government action plan for the period 2016 to 2020 are therefore preserving a balanced ecosystem, protecting natural resources and ensuring their appropriate use and rehabilitation, and promoting green economic growth. All of us, developed and developing nations alike, are committed to working together to address newly emerging issues induced by climate change. For its part, Mongolia has developed its intended nationally determined contribution and will work to implement its target of reducing greenhouse-gas emissions by 14 per cent by 2030.

The theme of this year's general debate, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", captures the main thrust of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. If the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are implemented, they will transform our world. But as important as the SDGs are, we should not overlook the compelling need to fine-tune the overall structure for their implementation at the national, regional and global levels. An important step in that direction was taken at the July meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Mongolia fully supports the Forum's declaration, which emphasizes the importance of fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies as well as empowering vulnerable people through collective action.

My country was one of the first to adopt the SDGs. In February 2016, our Parliament approved Mongolia's sustainable development agenda for 2030. It envisages Mongolia becoming an upper-middle-income country by 2030, eradicating poverty in all its forms while preserving an ecological balance and strengthening democratic governance. In parallel with the 17 SDGs, Mongolia's Vision 2030 integrates the three pillars of development — economic, social and environmental. We have mainstreamed its goals into our Government action plan for 2016 to 2020 and other relevant programmes.

Among global development priorities, the special needs of landlocked developing countries are a top priority for Mongolia. According to World Trade

Organization (WTO) estimates, landlocked developing countries' trade costs amount to applying a 260 per cent tariff to international trade, and the Office of the High Representative has concluded that on average, such countries' development is 20 per cent lower than it would be if they were not landlocked. Mongolia is committed to the effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, along with other landlocked developing countries. It is gratifying to note that, with 10 required ratifications already in place, the multilateral agreement establishing an international think tank for countries such as ours will enter into force on 6 October. The Ulaanbaatar-based international think tank has already begun its research activities, thanks to the financial contributions of the Mongolian Government and other partners. Once fully operational, it will further support landlocked developing countries in their implementation of both the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Enhancing connectivity is an urgent priority that all landlocked developing economies share. Mongolia acceded to the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement in 2016. We value the potential of its article 11, on freedom of transit for reducing trade costs and boosting trade for landlocked developing countries, which can help us integrate into global value chains and make the transition from landlocked to land-linked status. In order to further improve market access to its main trading partners, Mongolia is studying the feasibility of free trade agreements with the Eurasian Economic Union, the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Korea. An economic partnership agreement is already in place with Japan.

In order to enhance regional integration in our immediate region of North-East Asia, Mongolia is actively engaged with its neighbours on transit, transportation and infrastructure development. In July 2015, the Presidents of Mongolia, China and Russia signed an agreement to develop a programme on the China-Mongolia-Russia economic corridor. It will focus on the implementation of joint projects to increase trade turnover, ensure competitiveness in goods supply, facilitate cross-border transportation and develop infrastructure. In August, we agreed on our priority projects, and we are in the process of setting up mechanisms to coordinate the actual implementation of the economic corridor.

In December 2016, China, Mongolia and the Russian Federation signed an intergovernmental agreement on international road transport along the Asian highway network, marking another major step in trilateral cooperation. Mongolia is keen to work together with our two neighbours and other partners to improve rail, road, air and energy networks and pipeline infrastructure, and to increase access to the sea.

Mongolia's State energy policy, adopted in 2015, set the ambitious goal of producing 30 per cent of its energy demands through renewable resources by 2030. Our solar and wind resources are estimated at 7,000 and 5,000 terawatts, respectively. With those resources, Mongolia has basically an unlimited potential for exporting clean energy to countries in our region. We are working with our partners to implement the Gobi Tech and Asian Super Grid projects to supply renewable energy to North-East Asia. They offer countries in the region a wide range of economic, social and environmental benefits, including energy security, job creation and the reduction of carbon-dioxide emissions. We look forward to working with bilateral and multilateral partners on those important projects.

When the global community set out on the collective journey towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it pledged to leave no one behind. The SDGs have made the reduction of inequalities among people — including the disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalized — a clear priority for the international community. Sustainable social development is a prominent part of Mongolia's Vision 2030 for the SDGs. It sets out goals aimed at ensuring gender equality, improving the quality of health-care services and access to them, creating safe, healthy living conditions for its citizens, providing everyone with a high-quality education, ending all forms of poverty and enlarging the middle-income class. But while we cannot achieve the timely and effective implementation of the sustainable development agenda without peace and security, peace is being threatened on a number of fronts.

Mongolia is deeply concerned about the escalating tension in North-East Asia. We strongly oppose the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's destabilization of regional security by conducting repeated nuclear tests and launching ballistic missiles in defiance of the international community's will and in violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. As a country that has had nuclear-weapon-free-zone status for the past 25 years, Mongolia reiterates its principled

position that the Korean peninsula should be free of nuclear weapons, and we urge the parties concerned to refrain from any action that could heighten tensions in North-East Asia and to work to resolve the issue through peaceful means. In our view, the only way to do so is through dialogue. One possible avenue for that could be the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asian Security, which we initiated in 2013. We held its fourth International Conference in Ulaanbaatar in June. The Dialogue discusses not only security issues in North-East Asia but also potential energy and environmental projects, and as such is an open mechanism that can embrace the participation of every country in North-East Asia.

The current tensions have only deepened the concerns we all have about nuclear weapons. Mongolia welcomed the Assembly's adoption, on 7 July, of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. So long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of their use will persist. The only guarantee of the non-use of nuclear weapons is their total elimination. Pending the achievement of that ultimate goal, it will be critical to ensure the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as soon as possible, as well as vigorous implementation of the Action Plan agreed in the final document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We must also put an end to the protracted stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament.

Terrorism continues to pose a grave threat to international peace and security, and terrorist activities around the globe remain unabated. We commend the Secretary-General's establishment of a new United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism to provide strategic leadership for global counter-terrorism efforts.

In the twenty-first century, it is disheartening to see the world facing the largest refugee crisis since the Second World War. An unprecedented number of people, including the Rohingya Muslims, have been forced to flee their homes. The horror of the human tragedy that has unfolded during such forced displacements must stop. The current humanitarian emergencies require comprehensive responses that should include three elements — ensuring dignity for refugees, supporting host countries and addressing the root causes of the problem. It is the shared responsibility of all of us to promote the safe movement of persons and to respect international refugee law, human rights law and humanitarian law. Similarly, large movements

of migrants require equally close attention. We look forward to the adoption of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration in 2018. We hope it will be a critical tool for protecting the safety and human rights of all migrants, regardless of their migratory status, and for strengthening global governance on international migration.

Today the role of United Nations peacekeeping is growing tremendously. Mongolia is proud to be contributing to its support for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. In the past decade, Mongolia has dispatched more than 15,000 Blue Helmets to a number of hotspots and is currently one of the 30 largest troop- and police-contributing countries in the world. Mongolian peacekeepers are known for their dedication, skills and community-friendly behaviour in peacekeeping and reconstruction efforts. We intend to further enhance our contribution by providing engineering and special units to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, we reaffirm our firm commitment to eradicating the death penalty, torture and other kinds of inhumane and degrading treatment. Four days ago, together with Argentina and the European Union, we hosted a high-level event to launch the Alliance for Torture-Free Trade, a global alliance to end trade in products used to carry out torture and capital punishment.

Strengthening democratic and open societies governed by the rule of law is a long-standing priority for Mongolia. Accountable institutions, access to justice for everyone and the significant reduction of corruption are all key ingredients of sustainable development as envisaged in SDG 16.

At a time when the world is facing myriad global challenges, it is unsettling to have multilateralism questioned. In our globalized world, no State can tackle today's challenges alone. Global issues require global solutions. As a guarantor of security for all nations, large and small, the United Nations is a centre of multilateralism, but we must enhance its role as a centre of effective multilateralism. We commend the Secretary-General's vision of the United Nations as an instrument for a surge in diplomacy for peace, and his recent establishment of the High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation could not be more timely. Its 18 eminent members bring to it an unparalleled spectrum of skills

and, most important, the credibility that is essential for mediation.

In conclusion, I want to reaffirm once again that Mongolia fully supports the Secretary-General's vision for reform that can make the United Nations less bureaucratic and more efficient, productive and field-oriented. After all, that is the only way that the United Nations can become stronger and more responsive to the people it serves.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Aurélien Agbenonci, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Benin.

Mr. Agbenonci (Benin) (*spoke in French*): I would like to deliver the following message on behalf of Mr. Patrice Talon, President, Head of State and Head of Government of the Republic of Benin.

"At the outset, I would like to reiterate my warm congratulations to the President on his election to lead the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to assure him of my country's support in the fulfilment of his mandate. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank his predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, for his efforts. I would like to once again warmly congratulate Secretary-General António Guterres and assure him of our full support and, lastly, to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

"I extend my condolences and my sympathies to the Governments and the peoples of the United States, France, Mexico and Sierra Leone and all the countries in the Caribbean that have been victims of recent natural disasters.

"As we move into the active phase of concrete implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, Benin welcomes the theme of this session of the Assembly, entitled 'Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet'. This theme corresponds closely to the guidelines in our Government's programme of action, which places humankind and the planet at the centre of its concerns. Benin, as members know, is continuing its efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals through courageous and necessary reforms.

"On 22 September 2016, from this rostrum (see A/71/PV.14), I affirmed that mass poverty is a major threat to humankind, and on that occasion I

expressed the hope that the determination that led the world to adopt the Paris Agreement on Climate Change could lead us to set up a comprehensive programme for the eradication of mass poverty. A year later, that appeal is more relevant than ever, as the situation in our countries continues to deteriorate. Thousands of people are forced to emigrate, in most cases at risk to their lives, with, as a corollary, many security and economic challenges for host countries, as well as significant environmental consequences. That is why I find this theme useful for the sharing of efforts to ensure sustainable human development and the promotion of a world that respects the environment.

"Benin has committed to addressing youth unemployment as a means of eradicating poverty. In accordance with the road map of the African Union adopted by the Heads of State and Government in January 2016, the Government of Benin, in liaison with the United Nations, has drawn up a national road map to take into account the demographic dividend in Benin. The Government's programme of action outlines a number of projects that, when realized, will strengthen sustainable human development.

"The programme, known as Insurance for Strengthening Human Capital, fits into that dynamic. Its operationalization will make health insurance compulsory for all who live in Benin and will make it possible to establish a social protection system for the poorest and most vulnerable. Our programme of action also attaches great importance to the preservation of the environment, and important environmental protection measures are included.

"I believe it is important to take this opportunity to recall Benin's proposal on 15 November 2016 — during the solemn high-level session of the twenty-second meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Marrakech, Morocco — to establish an international research centre to respond effectively to the effects of climate change on agriculture in Africa, in conjunction with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, based in Nigeria. Our hope is that the appropriate United Nations bodies will consider the implications of that proposal, which would make it possible to ensure the sustainable development of agriculture in Africa.

"We are deeply committed to efforts to combat climate change, and we believe that the Paris Agreement is an indispensable tool for achieving that. In that regard, my country supports the various initiatives, particularly those of France, aimed at getting the United Nations to put in place a third generation of fundamental rights that would be embodied in a global pact for the environment.

"Our session opens at a time when the world is facing a multitude of complex challenges. For decades the world has also seemed prone to crisis and in search of meaning. In many parts of the world, peace is seriously threatened and the values of freedom and the rule of law are compromised. Violent extremism and radicalism weigh heavily on international security and stability.

"The assault on multilateralism, and therefore on the United Nations, is part of that pernicious trend that we must reject. That is why, in order to ensure the well-being of African populations and to address those problems effectively, the African Union needs reform more than ever. Benin strongly supports the ongoing reform process and very much wants it to be finalized as soon as possible.

"Reform of the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, must also proceed so as to increase the effectiveness of the Organization, particularly in the area of peace and security. The composition of the Security Council must be revised in order to take into account the changes that have taken place on the international scene in recent decades. We cannot call for respect for democracy in all countries and, paradoxically, not want it to be applied in reforming the Security Council. That reform, we hope, will make it possible to redress the injustice done to Africa, the only continent not represented in the category of permanent members of the Council. Benin's position on this issue is consistent with that of Africa, as set out in the Ezulwini Consensus. The United Nations, and more specifically the Security Council, also needs a fresh start.

"The important challenges to be met include the settlement of the Palestinian question. The creation of a Palestinian State as a full Member of the United Nations living in harmony with Israel will undoubtedly result in a dynamic that can reduce tensions in that region. We therefore support the

efforts of the United Nations to achieve that goal, as well as the initiatives to meet the conditions likely to promote an international conference on the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons.

"I would like to reiterate our commitment to strengthening our contribution to the work of the United Nations and to further working towards the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations. The signing in Cotonou on 8 February of the agreement on the status of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali fits into that dynamic.

"I do not wish to end my statement without once again affirming the deep attachment of my country, Benin, to the United Nations, which remains a unique framework for expression, dialogue and action, enabling us to cope in a unified manner with the immense and complex challenges of our globalized world. Multilateralism is an ethical and political imperative for peace. Benin will continue to work alongside all other peoples to build a more just, inclusive and fraternal world order."

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Pehin Lim Jock Seng, Minister at the Prime Minister's Office and Second Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Brunei Darussalam.

Mr. Seng (Brunei Darussalam): I have the great honour to convey the warm greetings of His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di Pertuan of Negara Brunei Darussalam to the General Assembly.

We congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his assumption of the presidency of the Assembly at this session. We also thank His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, who presided over the Assembly with such dedication during the past year. I also wish to send my warm wishes to our Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, and to praise him for his vision for strengthening our Organization.

Two years ago, Brunei Darussalam proudly joined everyone in embarking on an extended journey to achieve a global set of ambitious goals for sustainable development. For us, that moment was meaningful. It signified our Organization's relentless efforts to bring development and prosperity to all countries, regardless of their size and status in the world. It also showed us what unity can accomplish.

Our theme sums up who it is we are acting for — it is our people. It is therefore important to ensure that we fulfil our promise to them. It is a promise of a future where their hopes and dreams for better livelihoods can be realized. That will require our long-term commitment and significant investment.

In Brunei Darussalam, this means more than just building infrastructure or providing for basic needs. It also means raising decent people, people who care for their society and are committed to their country's development and future. That calls for an inclusive approach, with a priority of focusing on youth development. In today's increasingly competitive environment, Brunei Darussalam firmly believes that quality education is the key to building a new generation of highly skilled, innovative and confident young people.

According to the International Labour Organization, more than 291 million people around the world are estimated to be unemployed this year. Creating job opportunities, especially for our young people, will therefore be crucial to raising their standard of living. In Brunei Darussalam, we are continuing our efforts to diversify our economy and advocate free trade bilaterally and regionally, with the aim of achieving a dynamic and sustainable economy.

While pursuing economic progress, we should be mindful of the correlation between human activities and climate change. That is where the Paris Agreement on Climate Change can galvanize our collective actions to bequeath a cleaner, healthier, safer and more sustainable planet to our future generations. Brunei Darussalam will continue to do what it can to contribute positively towards that end. To reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we are promoting efficiency in energy consumption and gradually deploying renewable energies. At the same time, conserving our forests is a high priority, and that complements our multilateral efforts, including the Heart of Borneo initiative and, recently, the Queen's Commonwealth Canopy. All in all, it is about educating our people to care for and protect our planet. And strengthening global efforts in that area is also important.

For human and economic development to thrive, regional and international peace and security are crucial. That is the basic foundation of the success of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as it celebrates its fiftieth anniversary this year. So, for the

continued progress of South-East Asia and the region at large, it is the responsibility of all concerned to ensure a stable, safe and secure environment, one that is free of conflict, war or the threat of war. We also strive for stronger engagement through confidence-building, preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution through peaceful means. It is through such efforts and close cooperation among ourselves and with our external partners that ASEAN hopes to further contribute to global peace and development.

ASEAN's achievements over the past 50 years in ensuring regional peace and security have enabled Brunei Darussalam to pursue its development objectives in a peaceful and harmonious environment. We are pleased that our country has consistently achieved very high ranking in the Human Development Index of the United Nations Development Programme.

As the well-being of our people continues to be central to the nation, we are mindful of the negative impact of security threats, particularly with regard to our work to ensure a sustainable world. Like many others, we are concerned about the constant threats of terrorism and violent extremism. Sadly, in various parts of the world, the casualties resulting from terrorist attacks continue to shock us all. We condemn such horrendous acts and convey our deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims. We wish to reiterate that terrorism should not be linked to any particular race, religion, nationality or ethnicity.

In order to address those threats, it is important to comprehensively examine the root causes of terrorism, such as poverty, marginalization and alienation, notably among youth. It is our hope that focusing on education and youth development, creating job opportunities, advocating the responsible use of social media and promoting dialogue among different faiths and civilizations will greatly help in our efforts to bring about positive change.

It is equally important to instil in our people's hearts and minds the values of peace, harmony, moderation and mutual respect. It is through those values that we may be able to create societies that are resilient to destructive ideologies. Working closely with youth, religious leaders and local communities will be essential to help to realize that. We therefore welcome all efforts of the international community to prevent and eradicate terrorism and violent extremism, in all their forms and manifestations.

Also of great concern are pandemic diseases and natural disasters. On that note, I would like to join others in expressing our condolences and sympathies to the families of the victims of the recent natural disasters that have affected Mexico, Sierra Leone, the United States and countries in the Caribbean and South Asia. Given the destructive effects of natural disasters on any country's development and well-being, Brunei Darussalam values the work of all relevant agencies, including those of the United Nations, the World Health Organization and ASEAN. They provide us with means to gain expertise and knowledge on how to deal with the challenges posed by such threats.

As we seek to ensure that no one is left behind, we should not forget the plight of those suffering from war, conflict and occupation. Like everyone else, Palestinians have hopes and dreams of being educators, doctors, engineers, artists, athletes and innovators, which are all for the good of humankind. However, for half a century, foreign occupation has prevented many of them from achieving their full human potential for making a greater contribution to global development. Peace, freedom, justice and self-determination are Palestinians' fundamental rights. As the legitimate and truly representative Organization of the globe, the United Nations has a moral and legal obligation to enforce those rights and ensure accountability for actions that contravene international law.

We continue to count on the United Nations, as well as all relevant parties, to find comprehensive and lasting peace and stability in the region. We must press on with all efforts to translate the growing international recognition of the State of Palestine into positive changes on the ground, so that Palestinians can pursue sustainable development in their own homeland.

Brunei Darussalam looks to the United Nations to address pressing issues around the world. It is important for the United Nations to enhance its working relationship with its network of partners, including regional organizations such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Commonwealth and ASEAN.

In order to better reflect the needs and realities of the twenty-first century, the world needs a stronger, more effective and more efficient United Nations. To that end, we support our Secretary-General's ideas for reforming the United Nations and repositioning our Organization to focus more on measures for preventing conflicts, including mediation. We believe

such endeavours will greatly help the United Nations optimize its work and resources and, above all, save lives, safeguard people's dignity and promote peace and security around the world.

We want a United Nations that is fit for its purposes and principles, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of all Member States to ensure that the United Nations truly lives up to its name. As we strive for a better future together, we hope for a successful United Nations. A successful United Nations benefits humankind. When humankind benefits, we all win.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Dato' Sri Anifah Aman, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia.

Mr. Aman (Malaysia): I congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I am confident that under his able stewardship, the General Assembly — the main deliberative and policy-making organ of the United Nations — will see substantial development and advancement in addressing the many challenges that our Organization faces today.

I also congratulate His Excellency Mr. António Guterres on his appointment as the ninth Secretary-General. I assure him that his endeavour to make the United Nations an effective, relevant and august Organization has Malaysia's fullest support and cooperation.

The theme of the Assembly's seventy-second session, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", is most relevant and timely as we work collectively and individually to achieve all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. That journey will not be easy. Some have even proposed that it should be the only focus for the entire international community — to strive towards ensuring our future survival in an inclusive manner. We must strengthen our resolve and fulfil our promise to each and every citizen of the world that no one will be left behind.

On that basis, Malaysia has always oriented its development agenda to accomplish that very promise. Sustainable development has been at the heart of Malaysia's development approach since the 1970s. In 2009, the Malaysian Government launched its new economic model, which features three new goals:

high income, inclusivity and sustainability. Those pursuits continue to resonate well with the three components of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — economic growth, social needs and environmental protection.

We have also adopted forward-looking development policies through the Eleventh Malaysia Plan, which spans the five years from 2016 to 2020, under the theme "Anchoring growth on people". That development plan reaffirms the Malaysian Government's commitment to a vision of growth anchored in the prosperity and well-being of its people, while protecting the environment and strengthening peace.

In July, Malaysia presented its voluntary national review at the High-level Political Forum on SDGs. The review, which reports the actions and measures taken by Malaysia to advance the implementation of the SDGs, is testimony to Malaysia's continued commitment to achieving the 2030 Agenda. The Government of Malaysia strives to ensure that each and every Malaysian has an equitable share in the prosperity and wealth of the country and that no one is left behind.

Earlier this week, Malaysia joined other Member States in signing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We are convinced that the political and legal impact of the Treaty will steer the international community collectively towards the elimination of nuclear weapons and the maintenance of a world free of nuclear weapons. We were guided by the commitment of States to an instrument that is legally sound and feasible to implement, one that sends a powerful political message that nuclear weapons are categorically unacceptable.

Malaysia strongly believes in continuing to strengthen and enhance legislative and collective enforcement capabilities in confronting international security threats, particularly the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and specifically to non-State actors. We remain steadfastly committed to our international obligations in the fields of disarmament and international security through various national, regional and international approaches.

In that connection, Malaysia reiterates its strong condemnation of the nuclear tests and missile launches of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which seriously undermined the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Malaysia calls on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from

conducting further nuclear tests and missile launches, to halt its nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes and to comply fully with its international obligations in the interests of the maintenance of international peace and security. Malaysia joins other nations in stressing the need for an immediate resumption of peaceful dialogue and negotiations among the relevant parties with a view to finding a durable solution to the long-standing conflict.

We are also seeing a convergence of new security threats emerging from irregular migration and transnational crime activities, which include terrorism, trafficking in persons, illicit drug trafficking, money-laundering and cybercrimes. The threats that we face today have an increasingly regional and international impact, affecting our economies and lives in ways that we have never experienced before. For that reason, Malaysia has made significant efforts to improve its legislation and enforcement capabilities by adopting a holistic approach to preventing and combating those heinous crimes.

Sadly, as we devote our attention to peace, a decent life and a sustainable planet, there are people in the world who are suffering from horrifying crimes against humanity. In the past few weeks, we have seen a recurrence of violence instigated by a delusional and desperate militant group of Rohingya in Rakhine state. However, the subsequent clearance operations by Myanmar have claimed countless innocent civilian lives and caused more than 400,000 Rohingya to flee their homes. The indiscriminate violence perpetrated against the Rohingya during those operations is of grave concern to Malaysia and others. Such atrocities have unleashed a full-scale humanitarian crisis that the world simply cannot ignore and must be compelled to act on.

If the current situation is not addressed judiciously, the desperate people of Rakhine state will become easy prey to recruitment by extremists, for which prolonged frustration, anger and deprivation provide a fertile breeding ground. Although the Myanmar Government has given its repeated assurances that it will implement measures to resolve the issue, the recent incidents of violence have not assuaged our concerns or assured us that effective safeguards are being put in place on the ground. I therefore call on the Government of Myanmar to end the violence, stop the destruction of life and property and allow immediate, unimpeded access for the delivery of humanitarian aid.

I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the Government of Bangladesh for all it has done in receiving almost half a million Rohingya refugees over the past three weeks. Sheltering such a huge number of refugees puts a strain on any country. Malaysia dispatched humanitarian aid to Bangladesh on 9 September and will do more. In the spirit of compassion and humanity, I call on the international community to support the humanitarian efforts in Bangladesh.

Our collective failure to find a solution to the Palestinian question is totally unacceptable. The situation in Palestine remains daunting and appalling as Israel continues to violate international law with its heavy-handed approach to the defenceless Palestinians. As Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory marks its fiftieth year, we must continue to intensify our efforts to find a just and durable solution to the Palestinian question.

Malaysia reiterates that any action by Israel aimed at imposing its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the holy city of Jerusalem is illegal and totally unacceptable. We remain extremely concerned about the lack of accountability for the Israeli occupying forces and the ongoing blockade of Gaza and the resulting humanitarian crisis. We are extremely dismayed at the diminishing prospect of peaceful coexistence as Israel's illegal settlement activities continue unabated.

The implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), adopted on 23 December 2016, remains a challenge. In that regard, Malaysia reiterates its support for the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its proactive approach regarding the need for a written quarterly report by the Secretary-General on the resolution's implementation. We urge the international community, especially Member States, to continue to firmly support that vital call. If we continue to enable the resolution to be deliberately weakened in a shameless manner, rendering it unimplementable, we will be guilty of deconstructing any two-State solution.

Malaysia will continue to support the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The plight of some 5 million registered Palestine refugees must not be ignored. In view of the Agency's weakening financial situation, we urge the international community to strengthen its

commitment to providing it with financial and other relevant assistance.

In our fight against the scourge of violent extremism, Malaysia would like to reiterate the ongoing urgency of taking a moderate approach to countering the propagation of extremism and radicalization. To that end, Malaysia reiterates the call for a global movement of moderates that Prime Minister Najib Razak made in 2010, with the aim of dousing the flames of hatred and halting the influence of extreme and myopic ideas of intolerance, xenophobia and racial hatred, among others.

It is imperative that communities of different races, religions and cultures band together in seeking common peaceful aspirations and celebrating their diversity, rather than being influenced by and enticed into extremist traps. Malaysia therefore looks forward to bringing the initiative for a global movement of moderates to the United Nations through a draft resolution at this session. It is imperative that the voices of reason, tolerance and understanding drown out those that glorify the extremism that sows seeds of hatred among our communities.

If it is to carry out its arduous tasks, the United Nations cannot afford to stand still and remain idle. Since taking over the helm of the Organization, the Secretary-General, together with the Secretariat, has initiated various efforts to make it more efficient, effective, agile and fit for purpose. Malaysia commends the dynamic leadership of the Secretary-General through his various reform initiatives, which include reviewing the peace and security architecture and enhancing the overall development system and United Nations management reform, among others.

Malaysia is of the view that any major reform initiative that might include cost-cutting measures should not hamper or disrupt the Organization's existing development efforts to achieve peace and a decent life for all. That includes peacekeeping operations, peacebuilding, and development programmes in developing countries, especially in countries in areas of conflict. I wish to express my delegation's full cooperation, support and commitment to working closely with the Secretary-General, all Member States and various stakeholders towards implementing the reform initiatives.

Let us strengthen our resolve in fulfilling our collective responsibilities. I assure the Assembly of

Malaysia's continued support and commitment to the agenda of the United Nations and the work of the General Assembly.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Samura M.W. Kamara, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Kamara (Sierra Leone): I bring the Assembly fraternal greetings and very best wishes from His Excellency Mr. Ernest Bai Koroma, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone. President Koroma deeply regrets that he is unable to participate in the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, due to unavoidable circumstances. He has, however, instructed me to deliver the following message.

"I congratulate the President on his assumption of the responsibility for directing the work of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I would like to assure him of my personal support and that of my country throughout his tenure. Let me also congratulate and warmly welcome our new Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres. I commend and thank their predecessors, Mr. Peter Thomson and Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for their leadership and outstanding commitment to advancing our collective aspirations and energy, maintaining global peace and security and achieving sustainable development for all, as well as for their concern regarding climate change.

"In March of 2018, the people of Sierra Leone will go to the polls to elect their new leaders in local Government, parliamentary and judicial elections. A few months from now, my second term in office will come to an end, and I will be graciously handing over power to Sierra Leone's next democratically elected President. We have had 10 years of working together, 10 years of building and consolidating peace and democracy, of enjoying the atmosphere of a peaceful transfer of power, political party pluralism, a vibrant civil society and a critical media landscape. We are not yet where we want to be as a country, but with the sustained support of the international community, Sierra Leone is not where it was 10 years ago.

"Today, a country that was once regarded as a fragile State is ranked the most peaceful in West Africa and about the fourth most peaceful in Africa. We have raised our economy to become one of the

fastest growing in Africa. Even when we were halted and derailed by the Ebola virus outbreak, with the international community's support, we fought hard, and once again we are registering a positive economic outlook.

"As I look back on those 10 years, as I look back on that long and challenging path we have travelled together, as I prepare to step aside, I do so with a sense of pride, a sense of fulfilment and a sense of satisfaction that we have played our parts in the rebuilding of our nation, in transforming lives and in giving hope to millions of people.

"Let me particularly commend the United Nations for its significant contribution to restoring peace, security, stability and economic reconstruction in my country. I am happy to note that today Sierra Leone is described by the United Nations, through the Peacebuilding Commission, as a proud storehouse of lessons for a seamless transition from war to peace, democracy and stability. Those lessons have provided us with valuable and cost-effective tools for the peaceful settlement of disputes and conflict prevention.

"We have always been more than ready and willing to share those lessons with other countries in a similar plight, especially countries within our small g7+ group of post-conflict countries, which are striving to leave fragility behind and promote resilience. We have already held three highly successful and widely acclaimed peaceful, free and fair democratic elections following the end of the civil conflicts. Those are milestones that significantly demonstrate our exemplary performance in the consolidation of peace and security. The elections to be held will be no different in terms of transparency, fairness or credibility.

"The choice of the theme for this session, 'Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet', is apt and timely in an era of global uncertainties and challenges, including the emergence of new threats that tend to undermine our efforts in the promotion of economic and social advancement of all peoples. For 72 years, through this Organization, we have combined our efforts to prevent a major war and to promote human rights, fundamental freedoms, justice and equal rights for men and women of all races. Yet we are faced with unprecedented global challenges

of enormous proportions. The seemingly unending cycles of conflict and violence, the destructive and devastating impacts of climate change, the spread of terrorism and the largest refugee, migration and humanitarian crises in recent history continue to call into question the effectiveness of our present international machinery, as well as our ability to promote sustainable peace and a decent life for all.

"We should therefore generate innovative ideas and credible mechanisms that will bring all conflicts to a peaceful end. We should promote social progress, peace and security, human rights and fundamental freedoms. We must secure better standards of life for humankind. We must remain steadfast in our commitment to building a sustainable planet for present and succeeding generations. This Assembly should, in that regard, reflect on reforms that will reinforce our collective obligation to upholding the purposes and principles on which our Organization was founded.

"The General Assembly has consistently reaffirmed our collective commitment to strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes and in conflict prevention and resolution. It is a valuable and cost-effective tool. It is Sierra Leone's firm belief that we must continue to build on the gains made in our preventive diplomacy efforts, including heightened collaboration with each other and among our regional organizations and actors, making use of experiences that have helped us achieve relative international peace and security.

"In that regard, I am heartened by the powerful impetus of the preferential use of preventive diplomacy and mediation efforts in the maintenance of international peace and security by the United Nations system. The good offices of the Secretary-General, including the early-warning system and the international contact groups, are important instruments in preventing conflicts and must be further strengthened to effectively respond to any crisis situation. The effective utilization of Chapter VI of the Charter therefore remains the best option for the Organization in the prevention and peaceful settlement of disputes.

"Obviously, mediation remains a powerful instrument for the prevention and settlement of armed conflicts and must be utilized to the fullest extent

possible. My country has indeed benefited from mediation efforts under the auspices of the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States. We have learned from experience that for mediation efforts to be fruitful, they must embrace such measures as the timely cessation of hostilities, credible ceasefire agreements and the timely deployment of peacekeeping and observer missions to be able to undertake and supervise the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants and displaced persons.

"Furthermore, the role of regional organizations in partnership with the United Nations must be further strengthened to ensure a greater response at the regional level in implementing preventive measures such as early-warning mechanisms. Regional organizations are usually better positioned to generate the necessary political will for conflict prevention within their regions.

"The role of the Peacebuilding Commission has been exemplary, and its experience, expertise and knowledge in preventing conflicts from escalating into violence or war, as well as in supporting post-conflict endeavours, should be tapped into. In that regard, we encourage the sharing of the experiences gained and lessons learned through the engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission.

"As I have already stated, since I assumed the leadership of Sierra Leone almost 10 years ago, the country continues to make steady progress, particularly in the priority sectors of infrastructure, human development, agriculture and food security, democracy, international relations, justice, human rights and inclusive governance, as outlined in my medium-term development plan, the Agenda for Change, followed by the Agenda for Prosperity. Those transformative strategies have gone a long way to more visibly repairing and healing the damage and scars resulting from a brutal war, while also charting a path for achieving sustainable socioeconomic development and shared prosperity and, more particularly, for transforming Sierra Leone into a middle-income country by the year 2025.

"Three years ago, in 2014, the unexpected and unprecedented outbreak of the Ebola virus substantially wiped out the social and economic fabric and the gains that Sierra Leone had

painstakingly achieved over 10 years of progressive post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Shortly after being recognized as one of the countries with the highest growth rate in the world, our economy plunged very sharply, from record high gross domestic product growth rates of 15.2 per cent and 20.1 per cent, in 2012 and 2013, respectively, to record low rates of 4.6 per cent and -21.7 per cent, in 2014 and 2015, respectively. The epidemic revealed fundamental systemic weaknesses that still remained to be addressed in post-conflict Sierra Leone, especially in the health-care system. The fight to end, eradicate and prevent the recurrence of the Ebola virus was largely won through strong leadership, community ownership and national resilience.

"While we were on the verge of turning the corner in our post-Ebola recovery strides, Sierra Leone was severely hit by torrential rainfall in the early hours of 14 August, leading to flash flooding in several areas of the capital city, as well as the collapse of the hillside of Mount Sugarloaf, overlooking Freetown and its environs, causing widespread devastation. The impact has been penetrating and far-reaching, especially for women and children, who were most affected. More than 500 lives were lost, several people were severely injured and traumatized, more than 600 remain missing, around 7,000 were rendered homeless and physical property and assets worth an estimated \$30 million were lost.

"This year's rainfall is the third in a series of heavy torrential rains with devastating impact, mostly on vulnerable groups in our cities. Such rains displace hundreds of people, destroy farmland, businesses and properties and cost lives.

"While I once again take this opportunity to thank the international community for its support during these moments of grief and need, let me state that such disasters are a stark reminder that climate change is real. They also demonstrate the level of Sierra Leone's vulnerability to climate change. I therefore reiterate Sierra Leone's support for the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and urge concerted global efforts in dealing with this immediate, real threat to humankind.

"Under my leadership, Sierra Leone has enhanced political stability by strengthening

institutions and laying a basis for good governance by allowing those institutions sufficient leverage and latitude to deliver on their respective statutory mandates. My Government has recorded significant milestones in the areas of gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as in promoting youth employment and empowerment. We have established a more stable and regulatory environment for investment and wealth generation, which in the medium- and long-term will create employment opportunities for the inclusive socioeconomic development of young people, the disabled and women.

"My Government's programmes for local Government and decentralization have provided greater space for wider and deeper community participation in our development trajectory. Furthermore, the launch of the Open Government initiative in 2008, followed by our membership of the Open Government Partnership in 2014, has together created an effective platform for transparent governance and citizens' empowerment, thereby building trust and confidence between my Government and the people. With those developments, Sierra Leone is now on a solid path and will continue to consolidate its transition from war to peace and shore up democratic credentials, inclusive growth and a decent life for all.

"Learning from the Ebola virus outbreak, my Government has responded to the task of building a resilient health system to prevent, detect and respond to any public health threats of similar nature. We have established public-health laboratories nationwide that have full capabilities to test for viral hemorrhagic fevers, including Ebola. The floods and mudslides are pointing us to a greater emphasis on the environment, particularly regarding land management, reforestation, affordable housing, urbanization and upgrading slums.

"While we remain determined to accelerate the positive transformation of Sierra Leone, ensuring that Sierra Leoneans benefit from the dividends of our well-earned peace and democracy, we look forward to more strategic engagement with our partners in effectively implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in Sierra Leone, especially in diversifying our economy, with a focus on agriculture, fisheries, tourism and manufacturing industries, as well as on investment

in education and health. Evidence abounds that in those resource-full sectors there is enormous economic potential for public-private sector partnerships and for North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation. We urge our partners to join with us in tapping those potentials.

"As coordinator of the African Union Committee of Ten Heads of State and Government on the United Nations Security Council Reforms, I would like to end my remarks by reiterating Africa's concern about the slow pace of the reform process. We have heard that concern expressed by the current Chair of the African Union, His Excellency Professor Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea, as well as by several other Heads of State and Heads of Government.

"Beyond the compelling urge to correct the historical injustice done to Africa, we must thoroughly reflect on the current geopolitical realities that generally compel the reform and modernization of the United Nations system, particularly the Security Council. We must also reflect on the continent's numerical strength, its growing economic power, its population dynamics and its increasing role in the multilateral system. Against that background, Africa's demand, as articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, is therefore even more legitimate and ought to be redressed and treated on the basis of equity in the global governance system.

"As we look at the work that lies ahead, let us not lose sight of our shared obligation to ensure a peaceful and secure world by resolving our differences, including national and international disputes, through constructive dialogue. We must respect and prioritize strengthening the existing mediation mechanisms provided in the Charter of the United Nations. I am convinced that the pace of global development and the achievement of peace and security will significantly accelerate if we appreciate the wisdom of redirecting resources from the current nuclear arms race to people-centred development. That will benefit humankind more than a continuation of the ruinous competition for superiority. It will also facilitate the attainment of our desired twin goals of sustainable peace and development.

"As I graciously bow out as President of my beloved country, I will be leaving office with the sincere hope that the successful implementation of the priorities and programmes that I have laid out will enhance Sierra Leone's attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. I also hope that the international community will continue to stand by the great and resilient people of Sierra Leone in the pursuit of our collective aspiration to become a middle-income country. It is my fervent hope that the current momentum and development trajectory, which are defined by transformative strategies and catalytic actions, will be maintained through a sustained United Nations partnership with my successor. I therefore thank all of our development partners, both at the bilateral and multilateral levels, who have collaborated with us to support the strides that we have achieved during my tenure."

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in exercise of the right of reply, may I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and 5 minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Ivanović (Serbia): My delegation would like to exercise its right of reply in response to the statement delivered by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania (see A/72/PV.15).

At this seventy-second session of the General Assembly, as Member States work to address and find solutions to the numerous challenges that the international community faces, let me underline that the consolidation of international peace, security and stability continues to be a priority for the Republic of Serbia as well. To achieve those goals, my country has invested the greatest possible effort in strengthening regional cooperation, stabilization and reconciliation, for which it has been widely recognized and acclaimed. We therefor fully share the approach and vision of the Western Balkans working together.

During the general debate at this session, numerous dignitaries have underlined the importance of respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all Member States. However, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania again used the Assembly to call on Member States to recognize the independence of the Serbian southern province, the so-called independent State of Kosovo, contrary to Security Council resolution 1244 (1999),

the Charter of the United Nations and the principles on which the Organization is based. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister of Albania also misled Member States through his contention that dialogue is being conducted between two States — Serbia and Kosovo — and not, as is the real situation, between Belgrade and Pristina, that is, the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in the province.

Let me recall that all outstanding issues within the process of the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina are being addressed within the dialogue conducted in Brussels, with the facilitation of the European Union. Any unilateral act during the course of the dialogue will only undermine the process. Needless to say, interventions like those made by the Prime Minister of Albania today may jeopardize positive results of the dialogue and set back its progress in the future.

In conclusion, let me point out that settling the status of Serbia's southern province is among my Government's top priorities. We have demonstrated, time and again, our readiness to make an active contribution in the efforts to reach solutions that would be acceptable to all, taking into account the legitimate interests of all communities in Kosovo and Metohija.

Kosovo is not an independent State and is not a Member of the United Nations. Let me be clear and stress once again that Serbia will continue to use all diplomatic means to preserve its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Mr. Al-Kuwari (Qatar) (spoke in Arabic): My delegation rejects all the allegations and false claims about my country, the State of Qatar, that we heard earlier in the statement by the representative of the United Arab Emirates. Qatar is dealing with an illegal and unjust siege that violates its sovereignty and national decision-making ability.

What we heard today in the Emirates statement is a continuation of the false claims and allegations started by the countries that are party to the siege, including the United Arab Emirates, in an attempt to defame the State of Qatar and damage its foreign policy and its relations with friendly countries. The siege began with acts of air and sea piracy and has included electronic crimes such as the hacking of the Qatar news agency. Those allegations and false claims, which have been going on for three months, have been accompanied by a full-fledged siege that violates all the forms of cooperation

on which this Organization was established. They violate the Charter of the United Nations, human rights and a people's right to self-determination. They violate good relations among States and humanitarian principles. They also violate the charter of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Many countries have objected to the siege and called for it to be lifted. Many have spoken about its negative effects. We have been able to deal with those unjust measures through the unity of our people, our standing in the world and the solidarity that countries around the world have expressed so that we can confront the challenges together. We believe that these illegal measures impede United Nations efforts to enhance cooperation among countries in facing our common challenges.

Despite the many attempts to defame the State of Qatar, we know that the international community is aware of the aims of this campaign, and especially that the countries participating in the siege have failed to prove why they imposed it. They know that their claims are intended only to punish the State of Qatar because we are fighting for human rights, freedom of speech and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. They are trying to force the State of Qatar to change its position.

Qatar's record in combating terrorism is known to all in the United Nations and to our partners in this fight. It is better than the record of those who are stating anything to the contrary, and is illustrated by our participation in the international alliance against terrorism and in other regional and international efforts to that end. The State of Qatar is also working through bilateral mechanisms to enhance regional and international cooperation on fighting terrorism and cutting off its sources of funding. We have implemented our international obligations pursuant to the relevant Security Council resolutions with regard to countering terrorism and ending its funding, whether by freezing assets, preventing subjects from travelling, or implementing other measures adopted by the Security Council. The State of Qatar will always be firm when it comes to implementing Security Council resolutions against terrorism.

In conclusion, we want to state that we are all collectively responsible for respecting the purposes and principles of the Charter with regard to the sovereignty of countries, non-interference in countries' affairs and respecting human rights. We believe that the General

Assembly is the most representative forum in the world and the best for defending the Charter and human rights and international law. Instead of accusing Qatar, the Emirates should end all its violations of the Security Council's resolutions on Libya. It should stop creating chaos, launching conflicts and pretending to fight terrorism in order to serve its own interests, knowing that that is leading to more terrorism as a result of their failed policies. We call on the international community to condemn those measures.

Mr. Idrizi (Albania): My delegation is taking the floor in response to the statement just made by the representative of Serbia in reaction to the statement of the Prime Minister of Albania, His Excellency Mr. Edi Rama, this morning in the general debate (see A/72/PV.15). I wish I were not obliged to take the floor at this late hour, but I deem it important to say a few words to set the record straight.

The representative of Serbia questioned the call of the Prime Minister of Albania addressed to those United Nations Members that have not yet recognized Kosovo. Let me recall that Kosovo has been an independent State since 2008 and to date has been recognized by 114 Member States. In the course of almost a decade, Kosovo has established and strengthened its worldwide geopolitical identity and has proved itself to be a valuable contributor to peace, stability and cooperation in the region. Nowadays, Kosovo is a member and active participant in all regional initiatives in South-East Europe. It has signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union and, like all other countries in the region, is working towards future European Union membership.

International recognition and the full participation of Kosovo in all regional bodies have brought clear benefits. They have improved the overall political atmosphere in the region, facilitated trade and economic relations and improved the mobility of people, and young people in particular. We remain convinced that, based on that record, the United Nations and other international organizations would only benefit by the presence and contribution of Kosovo. That is why we firmly believe, as Prime Minister Rama stated this morning, that

"recognizing Kosovo ... and helping Kosovo move forward ... [is] a direct contribution to bettering the lives of Kosovo's citizens and investing in the

security and stability of the whole region and of all its countries, including Serbia" (A/72/PV.15, p. 20).

For several years, Kosovo and Serbia have been engaged in a dialogue, facilitated by the European Union and conducted at the highest levels. That has brought the two countries together in the quest for common solutions to a series of important issues for the good of their citizens. We support that dialogue and encourage both countries to continue to work towards full normalization of their relations as the best investment for them, one offering real prospects towards reconciliation. That is what both Kosovo and Serbia need. That is what the whole Western Balkans must achieve in order to build its present and design their future — a future in peace, a future in Europe.

Mr. Al Musharakh (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): We regret the fact that the representative of the State of Qatar has once again sought to distract all of those gathered here from the international commitments that his country should be upholding. Four countries have taken entirely legitimate measures against the State of Qatar, which claims to be combating terrorism, but in point of fact those States' decisions taken in their genuine efforts to fight terrorism are entirely acceptable under international law and duly take into account the serious violations committed by the Qatar, which finances terrorist organizations.

Our decision to break off relations with Qatar was not a difficult one. Our decision to sever diplomatic ties and relations was a direct response to Qatar's own actions, which have destabilized the region. Qatar meddles in the internal affairs of other Arab States, supports radicalism and fosters extremism in many countries in the Middle East. In point of fact, the State of Qatar is regularly violates international law and the decisions and resolutions of the Security Council. We shall therefore continue, on the basis of the decisions that we have already taken, to enact the measures that we have put in place because we have found no other way to protect ourselves from Qatar's hostile actions.

Qatar has a clear choice. It can either choose to remain a rogue State that does not respect international law or it can choose to be a State that abides by its obligations to the international community. It cannot wear both hats at the same time.

Mr. Elshenawy (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to exercise our right of reply in response to the

statement made by the representative of the State of Qatar.

We do not find it odd that the delegation of the State of Qatar is making allegations in order to defend its position after Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain became fed up with the situation and decided to enact legal measures, such as those taken recently, to prevent the Qatari regime from supporting terrorism and interfering in the internal affairs of other countries.

As we all know, the Qatari regime supports terrorism in Syria, Iraq, Libya and elsewhere. It has recently financed terrorism in Iraq, for example, by paying ransom to terrorists. The regime is also providing terrorists with weapons, safe havens and even with Qatari nationality, and it declines to prosecute or extradite them as it is required to do under Council resolutions. It is also very openly instigating terrorist acts. Qatar's support of terrorism, which it has maintained for years, has been specifically mentioned in reports of Security Council sanctions committees, and is known to all.

We all reject the regime's insistence on supporting terrorism. Its continued refusal to get back on the right track is the reason that our four countries decided to take measures in accordance with international law. We remind everyone, particularly the terror-supporting Qatari regime, that fighting and countering terrorism is a commitment and an obligation for all countries, in line with the relevant Council resolutions. The Qatari regime rejects that notion because it supports terrorism.

Mr. Al-Kuwari (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is truly regrettable that the delegation of the United Arab Emirates has once again verbally attacked Qatar. That comes as no surprise in the light of the results of the investigation conducted by the Qatari authorities and international agencies into the hacking of the Qatari news agency a few months ago, revealing that the hacking was carried out by a nearby Gulf State. That crime was accompanied by a campaign of lies and defamation targeting Qatar. The lies included in the statement made by the representative of the United Arab Emirates represent a continuation of that campaign, which everyone knows is fabricated.

We affirm that any allegations of a link between Qatar and terrorism are false and baseless. Those who stand behind that campaign have tried to falsely accuse Qatar of terrorism because of the impact of the use

of that term. Those abominable attempts have failed because the international community refuses to use the accusation of terrorism as a way to single out and berate countries and give them a bad name, thus excluding them from international efforts.

Qatar has made efforts that are supported and commended by many. It is therefore truly ironic that

the United Arab Emirates can speak about combating terrorism while some of its citizens have participated in some of the most heinous terrorist attacks in history, while its regime reaps huge financial benefits from terrorism and continues to defy international sanctions.

The meeting rose at 9.40 p.m.



General Assembly

Seventy-second session

19th plenary meeting
Saturday, 23 September 2017, 9 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Lajčák (Slovakia)

The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m.

Address by Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kabila Kabange (*spoke in French*): I wish to express my very warm congratulations, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, which is an acknowledgement of your distinguished career as a diplomat and a tribute to your country, Slovakia. I would also like to pay tribute to Secretary-General António Guterres for his leadership and efforts to strengthen the role of our Organization during this first year of his term of office.

The theme of this session — “Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet” — responds to the concerns of the moment in most of the States Members of the Organization. I am pleased with it, as it is consistent with the logic of the Sustainable Development Goals

and because, for my country, peace, stability and the improvement of our people’s living conditions are the Government’s priorities.

Seventy-two years ago the Organization was born out of the ambition to reform relations among States on the basis of the principle of sovereign equality and the desire to guarantee peace and prosperity for all. That ambition remains relevant and is carried forward every day by the commitment of women and men who are determined to see it fulfilled, sometimes at the risk of their lives.

In the face of the rise of terrorism in various forms, it is indisputable that the world to which we aspire depends on how we address peace and security issues. For the past year, my country has been the victim of terrorist attacks, especially in the Kasai provinces and even in the capital, by certain armed groups whose objective is to destroy the peace so dearly acquired, so as to thwart the dynamics of consensus-based problem-solving at the national level and to undermine our development efforts. In the Kasai, a mystico-tribal militia is using the civilian population, including children, as human shields and is attacking people and public buildings that symbolize the authority of the State. It is thereby sowing terror — decapitating law-enforcement officers, agents of the Independent National Electoral Commission, and administrative and traditional authorities.

Those were the circumstances of deplorable barbarity in which the two United Nations experts lost their lives in March. We are determined to make sure that light is shed on the exact circumstances of

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that crime so that that horrible act, as well as those to which our countrymen have been subjected, will not go unpunished. That is why public trials were begun several weeks ago, following the arrest of most of those presumed to be guilty. That was also the purpose of the recent conference on peace, reconciliation and development, which aimed to establish the truth of what really happened in those central provinces of the country, to promote reconciliation among the people of those provinces and to affirm our belief that all reconciliation necessarily involves justice and that there can be no real and lasting peace without justice.

My country remains open to all forms of collaboration on that subject. Thanks to that approach, which combines the restoration of State authority, dialogue and restorative justice, we have been able to reverse the dangerous trend in the security situation in the centre of the country, which has improved very significantly.

In the eastern part of the country, laudable efforts by the national defence and security forces have in turn allowed us to contain the terrorist attacks of the Allied Democratic Forces, which plagued our populations daily. We are convinced that the subregional cooperation initiative involving my country, South Sudan and the Central African Republic will also allow us to halt the terrorist threat posed by the Lord's Resistance Army. Our participation in the process should be seen as evidence of our determination in the coalition's fight against that threat.

With regard to combating sexual violence, I welcome the outstanding progress recorded by the courts, which have handed down hundreds of convictions for rape. No one has been spared from prosecution because of social position or military rank, which is proof that impunity in that area has ended.

Two years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is not too early to begin monitoring its implementation. In carrying out its commitments, my country has begun the process of prioritizing the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development in elaborating and implementing its national development plan. More specifically, in support of the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development, my country has been focusing on expanding access and equity, improving the quality of teaching and learning and improving governance in the educational sector.

We are are pleased with the increased access of girls to schools. Over 10 years, their enrolment rate has increased from 70 per cent to nearly 105 per cent. We are implementing plans to build thousands of schools, without neglecting in-depth reforms in that area.

Climate change is one of our greatest concerns, as it is a threat to humankind and our fundamental rights. Every State has the responsibility to contribute to limiting its impact. My country and the other countries in the Congo basin — home to the second-largest forest reserve in the world — are equipped, through the Central African Forest Commission, to help improve the quality of life on our planet. For its part, my country intends to uphold all of its commitments, beginning with the ratification of the Paris Agreement, which is now under way.

Like peace, political stability is for us a constant objective of our domestic policy. In that vein, for nearly a year we have been engaging in a dialogue that for us is a standing method of settling political disputes. In that connection, I would like to pay tribute to the African Union and other regional organizations. We are grateful for their support in that process. I also welcome the efforts of all the political forces in my country who, in the search for a comprehensive consensus on the electoral process, arrived at the agreement of 31 December 2016, the ultimate aim of which is the holding of elections.

At the request of all stakeholders for a new electoral register, voter registration has been under way for more than a year now. The last phase has just begun in the last two provinces in the centre of the country. We are pleased that more than 42 million voters of the projected 45 million have already been registered. In addition, a series of evaluations of the electoral process was started some 10 days ago by the National Monitoring Council, jointly with the Government and the Electoral Commission, which should allow for the publication of the electoral calendar by the Commission, which is the only competent institution in that regard.

Despite that progress, however, the challenges of organizing elections in my country remain enormous in terms of logistics, finances, security and legislation. We are confronting those obstacles with humility, but also with indisputable tenacity. Given the advances that have been made, I affirm that we are moving towards credible, transparent and peaceful elections and that our progress in that direction is irreversible, all

without external interference or any fiats. I ask the true friends of my country to sincerely support our ongoing electoral process.

The Charter of the United Nations imposes obligations on us, including striving to building a better world. For that reason, the Democratic Republic of the Congo maintains a strategic dialogue with the United Nations on the future of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolution. That strategic review should determine the pace of the reduction of the MONUSCO force until its full withdrawal.

It is clear that, after almost 20 years of deployment, the United Nations force cannot expect to stay in my country indefinitely or to exercise its mandate in the same format and without drawing lessons from the weaknesses that have been identified. What is important to us, and what should be important to everybody, is the credibility of the Organization and the effectiveness of the contribution of United Nations troops on the ground. That is why, for several years now, we have been requesting the adjustment of the MONUSCO force to suit its dynamic missions, and the reorientation of resources thus freed up towards meeting our development needs. In that area, as in others, we do not intend to compromise on the respect due to the sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is guaranteed by the Charter of the Organization.

I would like to believe that all who place their hopes in the United Nations — including my country — will fully commit to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and to the long-awaited reform of the Organization. I wish the Assembly every success in its work.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

Address by Mr. Taban Deng Gai, First Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the First Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan.

Mr. Taban Deng Gai, First Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Taban Deng Gai, First Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Gai (South Sudan): I am honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Salva Kiir Mayardit, President of the Republic of South Sudan, who unfortunately could not be present today owing to pressing domestic commitments back home.

I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. South Sudan affirms its commitment to playing its role in supporting you as you lead this historic session. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate His Excellency Mr. António Guterres and his Deputy, Her Excellency Amina Mohammed, for winning the confidence of this institution. South Sudan stands ready to cooperate and work closely with them.

The theme the President selected for this session, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", resonates very well with the aspirations of our nation for peace, unity, development and prosperity. It is also in line with President Salva Kiir Mayardit's declaration of 2017 as the Year of Peace and Prosperity. That solemn declaration is intended to cement our resolve that the aspirations of our people, for which they have fought long and hard, be realized.

However, the realization of peace is greatly impeded by a lack of resources. We commend the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union (AU) and international partners to shun and isolate political actors who seek power through violence. We urge all stakeholders to continue embracing that common position, and we renew our

commitment to further building on the progress we have made in order to ensure that our people inherit the future that we have always envisioned and aspired to.

Nonetheless, we do not wish to delude ourselves that peace, unity and development can be achieved overnight. On the contrary, they require relentless and concerted efforts, dedication and commitment by all partners, which we are willingly, consciously and vigorously pursuing.

We strongly believe that peace is not a one-day affair or event. For us and our friendly partners in peace, there is simply no other viable alternative to making peace. Nonetheless, bringing about peace takes time. Attaining peace in South Sudan is a process that will require our collective efforts. It is a consistent and persistent accumulation of positive steps towards achieving the world that we envision for the future generations in our country, in our continent and in our world at large.

It is therefore against that backdrop that the South Sudanese Transitional Government of National Unity has embraced the full implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan as the only instrument pivotal to achieving that mission and vision. By way of updating the General Assembly, allow me to highlight some of the important steps that our Government has taken to further enhance the achievement of peace in our young country.

The Transitional Government of National Unity continues to stand by its commitment to implementing the unilateral ceasefire that was announced by President Salva Kiir Mayardit in May 2017, and continues to call to estranged opposition groups to reciprocate our gesture of extending an olive branch.

With support from friendly partners, the Government has embarked upon implementing key aspects of the transitional security arrangements, such as security-sector reform, the cantonment of forces and the training of the Joint Integrated Police (JIP) in an effort to demilitarize our communities. We hope that the recently graduated JIP for Juba will be an example that can be emulated in other security sector institutions, especially through the overhaul and restructuring of the Sudan People's Liberation Army into a professional national army.

The Transitional Government of National Unity is spearheading grass-roots intercommunal

peace initiatives, as ongoing communal conflicts characterized by cattle-rustling, child abduction, high bride dowry and land disputes can be serious stumbling blocks to peace. It is essential to find ways to transform the way our communities interact with each other, and the international community should encourage and support Government efforts and invest in measures aimed at addressing those local conflicts so that success stories can be replicated all over South Sudan at different phases of our national dialogue.

It is in that area that I would like to highlight the role of young South Sudanese as either agents of, or detractors from, peace. One example of an intercommunal feud involving cattle-rustling and child abduction almost escalated into an uncontrolled conflict simply because the youth from the different communities were incited to violence. That makes us appreciate that our collective effort to ensure the situation in South Sudan can be salvaged only by embracing peace.

I also wish to highlight the important role that South Sudanese women continue to play as peacebuilders and custodians of intercommunal peace initiatives.

It is against that background that the Transitional Government of National Unity, with the support of religious leaders, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, the United Nations Development Programme and other partners, is engaging in grass-roots, people-to-people peace by investing in improving economic activities among communities, such as building markets, rehabilitating schools, constructing fishing storage facilities and peacefully disarming armed communities. All of that has improved relations among warring communities, host communities and internally displaced persons.

We in South Sudan are currently optimistic about the return of peace. We have recently witnessed refugees and internally displaced persons gradually returning to their villages voluntarily, and several steps within communities indicate that the movement towards coexistence and living in harmony is a reality.

There will be challenges and reversals, but the direction of movement should be the big picture. We are very open to listening to counsel and to joint action, but we also expect our partners to acknowledge and reciprocate progress and to demonstrate some sense of respect and trust. An overtly confrontational approach risks creating a siege-and-bunker mentality. However,

we are confident that soon violence and wars will be stories of the past in the Republic of South Sudan.

The national dialogue initiative declared by President Salva Kiir Mayardit is making strong and steady progress with regard to the Government's commitment to addressing a number of political and security issues, with a view to creating an enabling environment for dialogue. Some major steps taken include the release of prisoners, including journalists; the expansion of the Steering Committee to include all the relevant stakeholders in the country; an ongoing effort to reach out to opposition figures; and a declaration of unilateral cessation of hostilities. The primary objective of the national dialogue initiative is to promote reconciliation and enhance confidence in the peace process so as to make dialogue not just the only viable option for resolving conflict but also a foundation for the national constitutional review process.

At this juncture, I would like to note that the Steering Committee for the National Dialogue Initiative has embarked upon engagement with all shades of political opinion, in particular those living outside South Sudan, in order to ensure that the national dialogue is inclusive and that its outcomes reflect the views of all components of the South Sudanese community.

The Steering Committee is engaging teams of resource persons who will go to all the states, counties, payams and bomas to organize meetings with representatives of the relevant groups to seek their views on the grievances held by their people and to ensure that those grievances are effectively addressed and remedied. The results of those discussions in the states will be reported to the Steering Committee, which will in turn present them to the larger national dialogue conference. The process will end with recommendations and resolutions that will be presented to the national leadership under the presidency and to the national Parliament for final adoption and implementation.

Our Government is supportive of the efforts aimed at revitalizing the implementation of the peace agreement. We recently convened in our capital, Juba, a meeting of the IGAD Council of Ministers to deliberate on ways to further expedite the preparation for the establishment of a high-level revitalization forum, which is envisaged to focus on practical ways to expedite the implementation of the peace agreement.

Today South Sudan enjoys cordial relations with its neighbours. Those countries — Ethiopia, Kenya,

the Sudan and Uganda — are hosting South Sudanese refugees, providing corridors for humanitarian access and supporting development projects, all of which further enhance the efforts of the Transitional Government of National Unity to bring about peace. We are dependent upon those good relations in order to revive and increase oil production, construct and maintain important road infrastructure and provide electricity in the border towns — key ingredients for boosting the economy and work as incentives for peace.

Concerning Abyei, our Government reaffirms its willingness and readiness to implement the proposal of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel for the Sudan and South Sudan, of 21 September 2012, which, as presented by the Panel, was accepted by President Salva Kiir Mayardit. We are hopeful that the Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan will soon resume cooperation in implementing that proposal.

I wish to report to the Assembly that our Government is cooperating with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and is facilitating the deployment of the Regional Protection Force (RPF). In the past few months we have witnessed the arrival of members of the advance RPF, as agreed with the United Nations. The Government reaffirms its commitment to working closely with the United Nations, the AU and IGAD to oversee the smooth implementation and operationalization of the mandate of those troops in South Sudan.

The Transitional Government of National Unity continues to work towards ensuring that humanitarian access to those in need is unhindered. That has been done through continuous and open dialogue with aid agencies striving to have more humanitarian corridors opened up. I wish to commend the concerted efforts of the various humanitarian agencies that responded positively and worked to reverse the famine situation in parts of South Sudan. Despite some gains, I stress that continued support is necessary if we are to achieve a hunger-free South Sudan. I wish to take this opportunity to express our condolences and prayers to the families of those humanitarian aid workers who lost their lives in the line of duty in the Republic of South Sudan.

While we appreciate that saving lives is important, we also ought to save livelihoods. We cannot continue to mop the floor while the tap is open. The old "humanitarian intervention first and development later" paradigm is not a viable policy in the case of

South Sudan. It is important to incentivize peace and stability through a balanced approach to development and embracing a new way of working. Stabilization and recovery initiatives are essential, and emergency support needs to be effectively complemented with some level of economic dynamism that provides a new platform for social cohesion and resilience-building.

As partners, we all need to do business differently. As a Government, we will redouble our efforts to ensure access and improve the enabling environment for humanitarian intervention. It is our expectation that a smart combination and calibration of development and humanitarian support is needed to maintain positive momentum.

Our ultimate goal and responsibility is to provide an opportunity for peace to all South Sudanese people, one that will enable them to choose their own leaders through free, fair and credible elections. Our focus for the remaining months of the transitional period, therefore, is to ensure that adequate preparation and an environment conducive to those elections are our top priorities, and we will see to it that peace is realized and that sufficient resources are allocated to that task.

These efforts are core building blocks and prerequisites for boosting confidence among and within our communities, which will stimulate them to voluntarily and gradually return to their homes. I would like to reiterate our position that those efforts can be sustained if, and only if, all political actors continue to respect and reciprocate the unilateral ceasefire declared by President Salva Kiir Mayardit earlier this year.

The progress we speak of can come about only when we start to see progress in the reform of the Security Council. Reform of the Council is an urgent task, since its current composition and functioning do not reflect the realities of the international community in the twenty-first century. In order to achieve concrete progress on Council reform, it is imperative to launch text-based negotiations in the intergovernmental negotiations during the Assembly's seventy-second session.

In that connection, South Sudan wishes to add its voice in expressing its concerns with regard to the increasing tensions on the Korean peninsula. South Sudan supports the call of the international community urging North Korea to fully comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions on nuclear tests and ballistic-missile launches. South Sudan urges North

Korea to show sincere will and concrete actions towards the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

With regard to climate change, although South Sudan's greenhouse-gas emissions are negligible, it is one of the countries worst affected by climate change. The country is experiencing recurring droughts. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, it is the fastest-warming country in the region, with flooding and the loss of biodiversity and of livelihoods. I am glad to inform the Assembly that South Sudan has ratified the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and has prepared its national determined contributions and national adaptation programme of action to implement the projects embodied in both documents.

Allow me now to extend my appreciation to the countries members of IGAD, IGAD-Plus, the AU and the Troika, and China, Japan, Germany and the broader international community for their support for the peace process and development in my country. Although we appreciate that South Sudan as a nation cannot operate in isolation, the direction of the way forward must be South-Sudanese-led and its solutions must be home grown if we are genuinely striving to achieve sustainable results.

Long live South Sudan. Long live the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the First Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Taban Deng Gai, First Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Yosiwo George, Vice-President of the Federated States of Micronesia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Mr. Yosiwo George, Vice-President of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Yosiwo George, Vice-President of the Federated States of Micronesia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. George (Federated States of Micronesia): Let me at the outset congratulate you, Sir, on assuming your role as President of the General Assembly. I

also congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Peter Thomson of Fiji, for a job well done over the past year. I must also mention the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres. Since assuming the leadership of the Organization a few months ago, he has already shown himself to be more than equal to the tremendous tasks associated with his high office.

As we gather here today in this great Hall, natural disasters and calamities are striking in many parts of our world. Hurricanes, typhoons and earthquakes have devastated communities and displaced thousands of people in just the past few days. To the victims and their families around the world, I offer our sympathies and condolences on behalf of the Government and the people of the Federated States of Micronesia.

We condemn terrorist attacks, which have taken innocent lives. Micronesia pledges its resolve to stand united against terrorism, in solidarity with affected nations. On behalf of the Micronesian Government and its people, I offer our deepest condolences to all those nations and families that have suffered losses at the hands of terrorists.

As we witness current record-breaking megastorms, we cannot ignore their connection to climate change, especially to ocean warming and sea-level rise. In the wake of those devastating events, we must not only stay committed to our collective fight against climate change, but we must also redouble our efforts. Climate change is one of the most serious threats to global peace and security, endangering the very existence of our islands. It needs to be at the top of the agenda of the General Assembly. As the United Nations undertakes efforts to reorient its work around the priorities of peace and prevention, the United Nations system will have to adapt. We reiterate our call for the appointment of a special representative on climate change and security.

Climate change mitigation is also essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the eradication of poverty, ending hunger, building resilient infrastructure and shared prosperity. Without progress in fighting climate change, our sustainable development efforts will be futile. That is particularly true for small island developing States.

The Paris Agreement on Climate Change has provided an avenue to enhance cooperation in our fight

against climate change, and the world must seize the moment. Micronesia expresses grave concern that some countries have chosen to break with the international community and neglect the Paris Agreement, against the best scientific advice. As a small island developing nation at the forefront of the battle, Micronesia calls on all States to fully engage in global efforts to implement the Paris Agreement, support the Green Climate Fund and access thereto, and contribute innovative climate solutions.

I would like to share with the Assembly a story of global cooperation at its finest. This is a story of a treaty that was designed to save the ozone layer and succeeded, but it has also made major contributions to climate-change mitigation. The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer is considered the most successful multilateral environmental treaty of all time. That is why the 194 parties to the Protocol met last year in Kigali and agreed to amend the Protocol and expand its scope. Specifically, the Kigali Amendment allows the Protocol to regulate hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), which are chemicals used in refrigeration and air conditioning that can contribute significantly to global warming. Phasing down the use of HFCs will help prevent 0.5°C of global temperature rise, and complementary energy-efficiency measures in the same sector could help avoid another 0.5°C of warming.

We thank the parties to the Montreal Protocol that have already ratified the Kigali Amendment, totalling eight out of the 20 needed for the Agreement to enter into force. We call on other parties to ratify the Agreement as soon as possible, ideally before the next Meeting of the Parties, in Canada in November.

Along with the Paris Agreement, the Kigali Amendment is a major step towards the survival of small island States. As the story of the Kigali Amendment demonstrates, with intelligence, perseverance and cooperation, we can achieve anything. That is the motivation that keeps us all working together for a better future.

In the islands we say the ocean is us, as we are the ocean. As an island nation, Micronesia fully supported and participated actively in the United Nations Ocean Conference in June. The Call for Action from the Conference, entitled "Our Ocean, Our Future," highlights the actions required to achieve the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 14. Micronesia supports the intention to organize a second United

Nations Ocean Conference, in 2020, which will enable us to follow up on the commitments made at the first Conference and to assess our progress towards the full implementation of SDG 14 by 2030. We look forward to the work of the Special Envoy for the Ocean to maintain the momentum.

At the recent Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting in Samoa, our leaders endorsed the Blue Pacific identity as the core driver of collective action in the Pacific region. That was a fitting progression from last year's Pohnpei Oceans Statement, as elements of the Blue Pacific narrative reinforce the potential for shared stewardship of the Pacific Ocean.

We must now show ambition in tackling the mounting threats to the health of our ocean. The special case of small island developing States must be enshrined in the forthcoming implementing agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. We welcome the successful conclusion of the meetings of the Preparatory Committee, and now we must urgently launch and conclude the intergovernmental conference to draft and adopt a new legally binding agreement.

For Pacific islands, fisheries are a mainstay of our economies, our most important renewable natural resource and an integral part of our sustainable development plans. Effective conservation and management of our tuna resource is important not only for us who depend on it for our livelihoods and sustainable development, but also for addressing global food-security concerns. We must remain steadfast in our efforts to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in all its forms.

I want to take this opportunity to express our concerns about the lack of recognition of, and respect for, the rights of coastal States such as Micronesia to manage fisheries in their own exclusive economic zones (EEZs). In the Western and Central Pacific, some developed-country fishing nations are advocating for flag-based rights in regional fisheries management organizations. Such measures would undermine existing zone-based management measures and erode the ability of small island developing States, as resource owners, to exercise their sovereign rights under international law. That would not be an acceptable outcome. Therefore, we call on those developed-country partners to withdraw all such proposals and to actively support the efforts of

small island developing States to increase benefits from the sustainable management of fisheries in their EEZs.

Allow me to briefly thank the Secretary-General for his proposals on the peace and security architecture, management reform and other reform processes for the Organization. We commend his proposals, which will result in a more transparent, efficient and effective regime that is able to respond to the challenges our world is facing today. The United Nations must be fit for purpose. While reforms are vital to any organization, they must not disadvantage small island developing States; they must leave no one behind.

For many years now, my country has also paid priority attention to the efforts by Member States to reform the Security Council, but those efforts have resulted in little progress. We need to break out of this cycle. It is high time to shift to real negotiations.

In the Western Pacific, and especially in our greater Micronesian region, the provocative and aggressive actions by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea pose a threat to regional security and must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. Micronesia supports the actions taken by the Security Council. We call on the Council and on countries with the power and influence to help resolve the crisis to take action immediately to ensure that peace is achieved on the Korean peninsula.

We gather in this great Hall and debate among nations, but we are speaking for our peoples. We are trying to advance their interests. We are seeking to improve their lives. As history has taught us, we will fail our nations and our peoples unless we work together for the common good. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development constitutes a people-centred approach. Consistent with that principle, the theme of this session of the General Assembly is "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". We must believe in such a future and move towards it together. Multilateralism and the United Nations are more important than ever. Only together can we restore and maintain peace and security. Only together can we overcome the threat of global climate change. Only together can we build a sustainable future for our planet and all of our peoples.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Federated States of Micronesia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Yosiwo George, Vice-President of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal.

Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Deuba (Nepal): I bring to the General Assembly warm greetings from the people and the Government of Nepal, the land of Lord Buddha and Mount Everest, as well as best wishes for the success of this session.

I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I pledge my full support to you as you discharge your important responsibilities. I also wish to put on record our appreciation for your predecessor, Ambassador Peter Thomson of Fiji, for his sterling leadership.

I wish to warmly congratulate His Excellency Mr. António Guterres on his appointment as the Secretary-General. We extend to him our best wishes and full support, including for his efforts aimed at reforming the Organization to make it fit for purpose. I also commend his predecessor, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his dynamic leadership of the Organization during his two terms of office.

It has been more than two decades since I first addressed the Assembly from this rostrum (see A/50/PV.37). In the decades that followed, the world witnessed a profound transformation. While there have been some notable achievements in poverty reduction, school enrolment, gender equality and in combating communicable diseases, those successes have not come without multiple and complex challenges. The world has become more interdependent and better connected, and growing interdependence and pluralism have unleashed both challenges and opportunities. A large geopolitical transformation is still in the making.

The rise of inward-looking tendencies in some nation States, marked by a tide of populism on both the left and the right, has created confusion in the course of world politics. The global community today is facing a more complex and polarized environment than before, with multiple transnational challenges ranging from terrorism, climate change and energy deficiency to food insecurity, mass migration and extremism. Ethnic tensions and intra-State conflicts have taken their toll on millions of innocent lives, while the suffering of people in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen continues unabated. Unfortunately, our efforts to help have been too little and often too late. All of those challenges reinforce the role and responsibility of the United Nations.

As we embark upon the path of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, those challenges are the litmus test for our leadership. The choice of the theme for our deliberations at this session of the General Assembly, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", provides a clear direction to follow. However, the path to peace and a decent life for all will remain elusive without the resources and commitment needed to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. Delivering on commitments, making the process inclusive, coordinating efforts and shared responsibilities and backing up our efforts with adequate resources are all essential if we are to secure a sustainable future and ensure that no one is left behind.

The vicious race to acquire weapons of mass destruction continues to threaten the world. Nepal calls for time-bound general and complete disarmament. Nepal welcomes the confidence-building measures on conventional weapons that ended nearly two decades of stalemate in the United Nations Disarmament Commission. Nepal signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as a step towards nuclear disarmament.

Nepal deplores the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's continued defiance of the repeated calls made by the Security Council and the international community. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abide by all the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. We believe that this approach alone will safeguard peace and promote stability on the Korean peninsula. As host to the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, Nepal emphasizes the need to

reactivate regional disarmament deliberations under the Kathmandu process.

Terrorism is a curse on humankind and today's biggest threat to democracy and development. Nepal condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations everywhere in the world. The world must come together to address not just the symptoms of terrorism but also its root causes. An early conclusion of a global anti-terrorism convention is the call of our times.

Having contributed more than 130,000 peacekeepers to United Nations peacekeeping operations in some of the most challenging situations, we have shown a true commitment to the success of such operations. Nepal is prepared to continue to provide troops and civilian personnel for this noble cause. Nepal hosts a world-class peacekeeping training centre, the oldest in the region. The United Nations can make the best use of that facility by helping to develop it as a regional centre of excellence for peacekeeping training.

Nepal firmly believes that all troop- and police-contributing countries should be given a fair opportunity to serve in leadership positions, both in the field and at Headquarters, commensurate with their level and length of contribution.

The protection of civilians should be at the centre of peacekeeping operations. Nepal believes that protecting the safety and security of peacekeepers is key to enhancing their ability to deliver from the highest possible moral ground.

On sexual exploitation and abuse, we must move from zero tolerance to the zero-case scenario. It is in that spirit that Nepal endorsed the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians in their entirety and signed the Secretary-General's Voluntary Compact on Preventing and Addressing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

The Constitution of Nepal accommodates the aspirations of all of its citizens. It guarantees a comprehensive set of internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms. We are fully committed to the promotion and protection of those rights and to their being fully enjoyed by our people. The Constitution establishes powerful commissions to promote and protect the specific rights and interests of women, Dalits, Muslims, Madhesi, indigenous people and other disadvantaged communities. The National Human Rights Commission, an independent constitutional body, is responsible for comprehensively

monitoring the human rights situation in the country and investigating violations.

Nepal views the right to life as the most important of all human rights. Nepal's Constitution bans the death penalty in all circumstances. As a party to 24 international human rights instruments, including seven out of nine core instruments, Nepal has been fulfilling its international obligations with all sincerity and to the best of its ability.

Against that backdrop, Nepal has presented its candidature for membership in the Human Rights Council for the 2018-2020 term. Nepal's first-ever election to the Human Rights Council would be an acknowledgement of our long-standing commitment to, and contributions in, the field of human rights. It would also encourage us to do more at the national and global levels. We seek the invaluable support of all Member States for Nepal's candidature.

Nepal calls for concerted efforts at the national, regional and international levels to ensure that the migration process creates a fair, win-win situation for all. We call for the safety, security, dignity and well-being of all migrant workers. Although not a party to the Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, Nepal has earnestly upheld humanitarian principles by hosting thousands of refugees.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Protecting minorities and their rights makes the world more humane and contributes to world peace and stability. The forced eviction of citizens is a grave crime against humanity. We call on the international community to respond responsibly and act decisively in all circumstances in support of the right of refugees to return safely to their homelands with dignity and with the hope of rapid reintegration.

The cost in terms of human tragedy and devastation caused by natural disasters is increasing sharply. We call for greater global cooperation and coordination in prevention, mitigation and recovery. The trauma of the 2015 earthquake in Nepal has not yet subsided. Post-disaster reconstruction remains ongoing. We thank our neighbours, development partners, other friendly countries and the United Nations family for their generous support in our drive to rebuild.

Poor and vulnerable countries suffer disproportionately from climate change despite

their negligible greenhouse-gas emissions. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change should be implemented in coordination with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The least developed countries represent the most vulnerable group of countries. They must not be perennially equated with dehumanizing conditions of poverty and underdevelopment. Rather, they must be empowered to smoothly and sustainably graduate to higher standards of living at an early date.

As the cost of trade is higher for landlocked developing countries than for coastal countries, developing multimodal-transport infrastructure and providing unhindered transit rights to landlocked nations is critical to their sustainable development. We call for the full implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, the Vienna Programme of Action and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda in order to benefit from the potential synergies, in coordination with the 2030 Agenda.

The essence of Nepal's foreign policy is Panchsheel—the five principles of peaceful coexistence that are derived from the teachings of Lord Buddha, the enlightened son of Nepal. Those principles serve as the foundations for managing harmonious relations among nations at a time of increasing uncertainty and turmoil. We also believe in non-alignment. In exercising our independent foreign policy, we judge every issue on its merit without fear or favour.

We consider regional cooperation to be an important means of building trust and confidence among nations and making the best use of complementarities for shared prosperity. Connectivity remains at the core of deeper integration and the creation of win-win situations. Nepal firmly believes in the indispensability of the United Nations in multilateral affairs and global governance. All countries, particularly the major Powers, are responsible for contributing to the global good by fulfilling their obligations and responsibilities.

The reform of the Security Council is long overdue. The underrepresentation of developing countries in the Council must be addressed in recognition of their growing contributions to shaping the global agenda. Reform must be inclusive and representative in structure, transparent and efficient in procedure and accountable and effective in delivery. The Secretary-General's reform proposals are a step in the right direction. We believe a clear statement of support from

Member States, such as the political declaration for United Nations reform issued earlier this week, helps make the Organization more fit for purpose.

Any repositioning of the United Nations development agenda should address gaps, build synergy and improve accountability, while steering clear of the politicization of development under any guise. Nepal supports the revitalization exercise in the General Assembly with a view, *inter alia*, to more streamlined functions and fairer gender and geographical representation in senior United Nations positions.

Before concluding, I would like to share some insights into recent developments in Nepal. Our peaceful transition to democracy after a decade-long armed conflict demonstrates the power and promise of dialogue and negotiation as compared to the perils of violent methods for obtaining political control. The national peace process that began in 2006 concluded with the promulgation of a democratic and inclusive Constitution in 2015, through a popularly elected constituent Assembly. This unique peace process was home-grown and nationally driven. Its successful conclusion firmly established the culture of dialogue and accommodation in Nepal and could serve as a model for similar situations elsewhere. We appreciate the support and understanding that the international community provided.

Proportional representation of all sectors of our society is at the core of Nepal's inclusive democracy. Recent local elections firmly established the role of women in politics and development. The Constitution guarantees that 40 per cent of representation at the local level and one third of representatives in the federal and provincial parliaments are women. After the successful holding of local elections, dates have been announced for the first provincial and federal parliamentary elections in 20 years, in two months' time. The ongoing transitional justice process combines the reality on the ground with our international commitment to delivering justice and sustaining peace.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Nepal's profound commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. The Organization comprises large and small nations, and the vast majority of its membership comes from smaller countries, which confirms the universality and legitimacy of the world body. But a platform for a peaceful, stable, rules-based and just world order cannot be erected

without addressing our genuine concerns for security, development and well-being.

We believe that small nations have been sincere and serious in discharging their responsibilities as Members of the Organization. Even with their meagre economic and security resources, they have played a constructive role in it to promote peace, security and cooperation under very difficult circumstances in many parts of the world.

I would like to recall the wise words of Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala, the first elected Prime Minister of Nepal, who, in addressing the fifteenth session of the General Assembly, in 1960, said,

“Our physical strength may be negligible, but our moral strength, if we are true to ourselves and to the peoples for whom we speak, may be great” (A/PV.878, para. 228).

That statement is as relevant today as it was then. Let us collectively display our wisdom, knowledge and capacity to address the pressing issues of peace, security, disarmament and sustainable development with due respect for the internationally accepted rules in order to ensure a safe and stable world order.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Peter Paire O'Neill, Prime Minister and Minister for the Autonomous Region of Bougainville of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for the Autonomous Region of Bougainville of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea.

Mr. Peter Paire O'Neill, Prime Minister and Minister for the Autonomous Region of Bougainville of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Peter Paire O'Neill, Prime Minister and Minister for the Autonomous Region

of Bougainville of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. O'Neill (Papua New Guinea): On behalf of my Government and the people of Papua New Guinea, I am honoured to address the General Assembly. I am pleased to convey my country's appreciation to the outgoing President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Ambassador Peter Thomson of Fiji, for his outstanding presidency this past year.

As he takes up his mandate, Papua New Guinea welcomes and congratulates Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, and the Republic of Slovakia, on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I pledge Papua New Guinea's support for his presidency and the priority areas he has chosen.

I would also like to welcome and extend our best wishes for every success to His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his new, vital and very demanding role. It is heartening to note his passion and drive to transform the United Nations. The Organization can better serve the international community if it becomes more accountable, transparent, inclusive and fair, and to that end Mr. Guterres has Papua New Guinea's strongest support. Let me also pay tribute to the former Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his outstanding work during his tenure.

Our world continues to be confronted by multiple unprecedented challenges that are increasingly complex in nature. We are facing such serious adverse impacts as an uncertain global economy, climate change, the declining health of our marine habitats and heightened security fears.

The challenges that we face are unlikely to be overcome, or major goals achieved, by individual countries acting on their own, which I am sure is a view shared by many. We must work together to build a better, more stable and equitable world for all our citizens. We all have to do more, and we must renew our faith in the promise of the Charter of the United Nations, which remains a beacon of hope for humankind.

Papua New Guinea recently held its tenth national elections. Our Government would like to put on record our profound appreciation to all of our development partners, including the United Nations, for the valued support provided to us as the elections were conducted.

Since being returned to office, our Government has pledged to further increase our focus on the core policies we have striven to implement during the past five years. Those policies are changing the lives of our 8 million men, women and children for the better. We have introduced free education across our entire country and doubled the number of children in school, most of whom are girls. We are extending universal health care to our people, which is helping them to live longer and is keeping families together. We have commenced the largest infrastructure programme in our nation's history, building more roads, ports and public buildings, including hospitals. Our particular focus on infrastructure is promoting economic development and greater opportunity, especially for our rural majority. Those policies underpin our commitment to sustainable economic growth and to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

A nation such as Papua New Guinea can have all the best intentions and plans to continue to move our country forward, but we live in a rapidly globalizing world where events and influences transcend national borders. Many of the challenges that confront us today are not of our making; rather, we have to bear the consequences of actions taken by others and must take up the task of addressing them.

Global economic uncertainty, depressed commodity prices and political instability all continue to undermine growth in many developing countries.

Papua New Guinea remains concerned at the continuing threats of violence in the world today, be they by terrorist groups or the actions of rogue States.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the recent nuclear missile tests by North Korea. They are direct threats to the lives of millions of innocent people in the United States, Japan, South Korea, and more particularly in our Pacific region. We are concerned that these activities are taking place in our backyard. They are in direct breach of the will of the international community as expressed through the numerous relevant resolutions of the Security Council. Rather than inflamed rhetoric that could have drastic consequences, we call for a peaceful resolution through political dialogue.

One of the greatest threats to humankind comes from within our global community of nations. Climate change is real, and it is claiming lives and destroying communities. It is putting the future of nations at real

risk. The recent barrage of hurricanes that hit the Caribbean and the United States is just another example of some of the extreme weather events that we are all confronting. Papua New Guinea offers its condolences to the countries affected and urges that the loss of life serve as another wake-up call for us all.

Papua New Guinea and other Pacific island nations remain highly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change, including extreme tropical storms, severe droughts and seawater flooding many coastal communities. The seeds of climate change that we see today were laid by developed countries over past decades and centuries. Although their own development was enhanced, developing countries today continue to suffer because of their actions. The chances for development in smaller countries have been harmed by the mess created by now-powerful nations. In Papua New Guinea and around the world, our peoples are dying as a consequence, living standards are being eroded, and opportunities are disappearing. The world needs to step up its action and respond effectively to climate-change challenges by making further commitments to reduce emissions and help affected communities.

We are committed to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and to implementing domestic policies to reduce our own emissions. We welcome and support Fiji's presidency of the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and will work together for a successful meeting in Bonn.

Papua New Guinea is an island nation. The very well-being and economic development of our people is tied to the resources coming from our oceans and seas. We share growing concern about the declining health of the oceans and seas that sustain many nations. Uncontrolled and poorly regulated human activities, including illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, pollutants, plastics and marine debris, are killing our waterways. Global fish stocks are being decimated, ecosystems are being destroyed, and our people are being forced to abandon their traditional homes because they no longer have jobs or food.

This is not a local problem; it is global in its scope and therefore needs greater global action. We do what we can at the local level. We in Papua New Guinea have established an integrated national oceans policy and a supporting office to ensure a more coherent national approach to oceans governance. Our commitment to

SDG 14 is undiminished, as was demonstrated by our support for the call-for-action outcome document and the voluntary commitments that we have all pledged. We are pleased with the historic outcome of the first-ever United Nations Ocean Conference held four months ago in the General Assembly to support the implementation of SDG 14. We welcome and support the offer from Kenya and Portugal to be the next hosts of the United Nations Ocean Conference.

Another major problem and challenge that we face in the world today is the dislocation of people from their homes and communities. Indeed, we are facing a refugee crisis in the world today. People are being pushed out of their homes as a result of war, natural disasters and the loss of livelihood. This is the plight of millions of people in developing countries who face dismal futures if in fact they succeed in surviving at all. The responsibility for accommodating these refugees — people who through no fault of their own are forced to flee — lies with the countries whose actions that led to their displacement.

Today, we live in a globalizing world, but the privilege to travel freely is held by only a lucky few who have been born principally in developed and industrialized countries. We need a more sensible and humane approach to achieving mobility for all our people. We have only one planet, we all share that planet, and the people of that planet should be free to travel and settle when their home has been taken away from them.

We talk about greater freedoms for our people. We talk about freedom of speech, democracy, transparency, good governance and human rights, but talk is cheap. All too often, the concept of human rights is a mere theme of convenience. We need to make the migration process less complicated and more humane.

Papua New Guinea fully supports reform at the United Nations. The United Nations must be fit for purpose. It must keep pace with the environment in a rapidly changing world. There is broad agreement on the importance of United Nations reform, but the main challenge before us is how we are going to go about delivering it. We are heartened by the Secretary-General's passion and call for decisive and swift action on his reform agenda, including in terms of ensuring gender parity at the top levels of the Secretariat. He has our undivided support.

With respect to the Security Council reform process, it must advance the core interests of the vast majority of the States Members of the United Nations so as to make the Council more broadly representative, transparent, accountable, effective and efficient. Given its critical mandate, the Security Council needs to be more efficient in its response to contemporary global challenges and circumstances.

In conclusion, the opportunities that lie before the global community are great, but they are also extremely challenging, particularly for countries with developing economies, such as Papua New Guinea. Regardless of where we come from, however, we must do more. All nations — large or small, rich or poor, weak or strong — must strengthen their resolve and work together. I thank all Member States for the achievements that we continue to make through the United Nations, and I pledge that Papua New Guinea will continue to work with them to achieve much more.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Peter Paire O'Neill, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Walid Al-Moualem, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Al-Moualem (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by congratulating Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and wish him every success. I would also like to thank his predecessor for the important role he played at the helm of the General Assembly during the seventy-first session. I congratulate Mr. António Guterres on his appointment as Secretary-General and wish him all the best in carrying out his responsibilities in service of the purposes and principles of the United Nations as set forth in the Charter.

As we meet again, our world is facing challenges and dangers that are mounting on a daily basis. There is a persistent stand-off between two sets of forces — one that strives to control and dominate nations and their riches by seeking to turn back the clock, re-establish a unipolar world order, fuel chaos and war and

violate international humanitarian law, and one that, in opposition, is working tirelessly to create a more balanced, secure and just world, respecting the sovereignty of States and the right of peoples to exercise self-determination and build their own future.

As we meet again, many people continue to pay dearly with their lives, losing the security, stability and livelihoods they once had, as a result of policies forced upon them by certain countries. These countries falsely believe that they can use terrorism as a tool to satisfy their greed and further ill-conceived agendas that do not serve the interests of any people, let alone their own.

No people have suffered as greatly at the hands of terrorism as the Syrian people, who, for six years now, have fought against terrorism pouring in from all over the world, with the support of parties from across the region and beyond. For more than six years, Syrians have endured the worst conditions and made the greatest sacrifices in order to defend their country in a terrorist war of unprecedented brutality that has spared nothing and no one. It has targeted innocent people, services, infrastructure and cultural heritage, and yet Syria is more determined than ever to eradicate terrorism from every part of the country without exception, relying on the selfless sacrifices of our army and the dedication of our people.

Since the beginning of the war, our State policy has followed two main tracks: combating terrorism and working towards a political solution that will end the bloodshed and restore stability. On the counter-terrorism front, the Syrian Arab Army, along with its supporting forces and allies, is making daily achievements in clearing out terrorist-occupied territories and removing the terrorists themselves. Nevertheless, the threat of this plague persists as terrorists claim the lives of Syrians on a daily basis and deplete the country's resources.

We must all understand that terrorism and the underlying extremist takfiri ideology will continue to spread like a tumour throughout the world and haunt our peoples unless every one of us demonstrates a genuine will to cooperate and confront it together. Any such endeavour must respect the sovereignty of States and the interests of the people, and it must set aside the illusion that terrorism can be used as a tool for political gains and narrow interests.

On the political front, since the early months of the crisis the Syrian Government has spared no effort to stop the bloodshed. The success of reconciliation at

the local level would not have been possible without the leadership, political support and numerous amnesty decrees issued by President Bashar Al-Assad, which allowed everyone who had taken up arms to lay them down and resume their normal lives. These successful acts of reconciliation have allowed tens of thousands of internally displaced persons and refugees to return home and helped to improve the living conditions of a great number of Syrians who had fallen victim to terrorist crimes.

Syria is determined to scale up its reconciliation efforts wherever possible, as this is the best way to alleviate the suffering of Syrians and restore stability and normality. Since the very first day, the Syrian Government has considered all initiatives to put an end to the war with an open mind. However, all these initiatives eventually failed because States sponsoring terrorism persisted in their decision to pursue aggressive policies against Syria and its people.

With regard to the Astana and Geneva tracks, the Syrian Government has shown how serious and committed it is by doing its best to provide the conditions necessary for these efforts to succeed and for their goals to be achieved. We are encouraged by the Astana process and the resulting de-escalation zones, and we hope that it will help us to achieve an actual cessation of hostilities and separate terrorist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Jabhat al-Nusrah and others from the groups that have agreed to join the process. This will be the real test of how committed and serious these groups and their Turkish sponsors are.

So far, under President Erdoğan, Turkey has continued to pursue its aggressive policies against the Syrian people and laboured under the illusion that terrorism will help serve its subversive agendas in Syria and other countries of the region. Turkey's position stands in stark contrast to the positive and constructive role played by Russia and Iran. Notwithstanding its commitment to the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, Syria reserves the right to respond to any violation by other parties. Syria also stresses that the de-escalation zones are a temporary arrangement that must not violate the territorial unity of Syria.

The Syrian Government reaffirms its commitment to the Geneva process and to making further progress on this track. In the absence of a genuine national

opposition that could be a partner in Syria's future and as countries with influence over the other parties continue to block meaningful progress, this process has yet to bear fruit. It is truly unfortunate that among the countries blocking a solution in Syria are members of this international Organization and even permanent members of the Security Council.

The Syrian Government has always insisted that any solution in Syria must respect the country's non-negotiable principles, its red line for all Syrians. These principles include the complete rejection of terrorism, the unity of the territory and the people of Syria, and the rejection of any outside interference in political decisions involving Syria's future. Only Syrians have the right to make such decisions, whether now or in future. Absolutely no one can deprive the free Syrian people of their will to build the future of their country.

For decades, Israel has continued its unscrupulous, thuggish actions with full impunity. This usurper entity has occupied Arab territories in Palestine and the Golan for more than 70 years and has committed horrific crimes against innocent civilians. Israel has not stopped there; it has publicly interfered in the Syrian crisis since its earliest days, providing all forms of support, including funds, weapons, materiel and communications equipment, to the most visible terrorist gangs. Israel has also bombed Syrian army positions in service to terrorist agendas. Coordination between the Israel and the terrorists was at its highest point when terrorist groups decided to target Syrian air-defence assets that are used to defend Syria against Israeli aggression.

The unlimited Israeli support provided to terrorists in Syria does not come as a surprise. After all, they share the same interests and goals. Let me be clear, however: it is delusional to believe even for a moment that the crisis in Syria will make us forget our inalienable right to fully recover the occupied Syrian Golan to the lines of 4 June 1967.

For more than six years, the States and parties that were behind the war in Syria have continued to peddle lies and falsely accuse the Syrian Government of using chemical weapons despite the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons confirmation that Syria has fully eliminated its chemical programme. This is proof enough of an ill-conceived intention to tarnish the true image of the Syrian Government in the

eyes of the international public and to come up with new excuses for continued aggression against Syria, which naturally favours the terrorists and their supporters. So it was when the United States blatantly attacked the Shayrat air base, claiming that it contained chemical weapons used in the alleged Khan Shaykhun attack. And, as we have done with regard to every accusation of this kind, we confirm our readiness to receive and cooperate with United Nations investigation teams.

Certain countries have boasted about fighting terrorism in Syria and having the interests of Syrians at heart. They have established coalitions and held dozens of conferences under deceptive titles, such as the Group of Friends of the Syrian People. It is quite ironic that these same countries are shedding the blood of thousands of Syrians through their support for terrorists, bombing innocent civilians and destroying their livelihoods. The so-called Global Coalition against Da'esh, created three years ago, allegedly to fight terrorist groups such as ISIL, and led by the United States, has killed many more innocent Syrians, mostly women and children, than terrorists, and has destroyed vital infrastructure that Syrians had worked for years to build. It has also flagrantly used phosphorus bombs and other internationally prohibited weapons for all the world to see.

We cannot understand the silence of the international community in the face of these crimes. The international community has not condemned or sought to stop these crimes even though the Syrian Government has repeatedly appealed to the Security Council to assume its main responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. The Syrian Government has urged the Council to implement its own resolutions on counter-terrorism, in particular resolution 2253 (2015), and prevent the Global Coalition from committing even more crimes against the citizens of my country.

While the Global Coalition has failed to make any meaningful progress against the terrorist group ISIL, the Syrian army, together with its allies and friends, has been able to secure real and significant gains and drive terrorists out of large parts of the Syrian desert. In what was considered a strategic achievement, the Army was recently able to break the siege inflicted by ISIL on the city of Deir ez-Zor and its people more than three years ago. This achievement will significantly improve the humanitarian situation in the city and contribute to the fight against terrorism in general.

We have declared more than once that it is impossible to fight terrorism without coordinating with the Syrian Government. It is the only way to make real gains in the war on terrorism. Any presence of foreign troops on Syrian territory without the consent of the Government is considered a form of occupation, wanton aggression and a flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The war that the most powerful countries and terrorist groups are waging against Syria is not just a military war. It has taken other forms, no less brutal or aggressive, in order to break the will of the Syrian people and punish them for their firm support of the Army as it strives to defend Syria's political independence and territorial unity. That is why those countries have imposed a stifling economic blockade against Syria in blatant violation of international law, with a view to destroying the livelihoods of Syrians and increasing their suffering. These unilateral, coercive measures have been thrust upon vital sectors, most notably health-care services. Syria used to have an advanced health-care system. However, today, Syrians are denied access to many types of medicine, even those needed to treat life-threatening conditions, such as cancer. Sanctions such as these are a clear sign of certain countries' hypocrisy as they shed tears over the suffering of Syrians while in fact practicing a more surreptitious form of terrorism.

The refugee problem is one of the consequences of terrorism. As Syria will need the efforts of every Syrian in the near future, the Syrian Government has made their return to their homes a top priority. To this end, the Syrian Government has embarked on a mission to liberate and secure areas occupied by terrorists and improve the basic living conditions of all Syrians.

Given that the United Nations has failed to uphold its own Charter and the principles of international law, all of us must consider reforming the Organization so that it can play its role effectively and defend legitimate rights from the law of the jungle that some are trying to impose. Our nations are yearning for a safer, more secure, stable and prosperous world. That world will remain a fantasy as long as certain countries maintain the belief that they can foment chaos and mayhem and force their will upon the world with full impunity.

With its resolute people, its courageous Army and the support of its loyal allies, my country is steadily marching towards the goal of rooting out terrorism. The

liberation of Aleppo and Palmyra, the lifting of the siege of Deir ez-Zor and the eradication of terrorism from many parts of Syria prove that victory is now within reach. I am confident that, when the unjust war on Syria is over, the Syrian Army will go down in history as the army that heroically defeated — with the help of supporting forces and allies — terrorists who came to Syria from many countries and received broad support in the form of weapons, funding, training, access and political cover from the most powerful countries in the world.

Those terrorists have tried and failed to impose their backward ideology on a peaceful nation that was once a cradle of civilization. For generations to come, history books will recount the achievements of the Syrian people and their dedication as they countered a barbaric terrorist campaign and fought unfair measures designed to compound their suffering and deprive them of their basic requirements. The Syrian people have stood their ground against all odds because they know that this war has been waged to eliminate their country and, with it, their very existence. Theirs is an example to follow for any people facing — today or in future — similar attempts to break their will and deny them their freedom and sovereignty.

Address by Mr. Roosevelt Skerrit, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Public Service of the Commonwealth of Dominica

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Public Service of the Commonwealth of Dominica.

Mr. Roosevelt Skerrit, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Public Service of the Commonwealth of Dominica, was escorted to the rostrum

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Roosevelt Skerrit, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Public Service of the Commonwealth of Dominica, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Skerrit (Dominica): I come to the General Assembly straight from the front line of the war on climate change. With physical and emotional difficulty, I have left my bleeding nation to be in this Hall today because these are the moments for which the United

Nation exists. It is why we have always collectively respected and held dear the values of this Organization.

We congratulate the President on his election and wish him well in upholding the ideals of humankind's greatest invention. In keeping with the Organization's regard for fraternity, we take this opportunity to express our condolences to our brothers and sisters in Antigua and Barbuda, Anguilla, Cuba, Saint Martin, Saint Thomas, the British Virgin Islands, the Turks and Caicos Islands, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, as well as to those who have suffered losses in the host country, the United States, in Texas and Florida. For our brothers and sisters in Mexico, we stand in prayerful solidarity following the catastrophic earthquake this past week.

Warmer air and sea temperatures have permanently altered the climate between the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. Heat is the fuel that takes ordinary storms that we could normally master in our sleep and supercharges them into a devastating force. In the past, we would prepare for a single heavy storm per year. Now thousands of storms form on a breeze in the mid-Atlantic and line up to pound us with maximum force and fury.

Prior to this century, no other generation had seen more than one category 5 hurricane in its lifetime. This century it has already happened twice and, notably, these two events occurred in the space of the last two weeks. I should add that we are only midway into this year's hurricane season. In the case of Dominica, it had been only two years since we lost lives and endured substantial physical and infrastructural damage from the ravages of the floods and mudslides caused by Tropical Storm Erika.

To deny climate change is to procrastinate while the Earth founders. It is to deny a truth that we have just lived. It is to mock the thousands of my compatriots who in a few hours will watch the night descend upon Dominica without a roof over their heads, in fear of sudden mudslides or whatever else the next hurricane might bring. We as a country and a region did not start this war against nature. We did not provoke it. But the war has come to us.

There is no more time for conversation. There is little time left for action. While the big countries talk, the small island nations suffer. We need action and we need it now. We in the Caribbean do not produce greenhouse gases or sulphate aerosols. We do not pollute

or overfish our oceans. We have made no contribution to global warming that can move the needle, yet we are among the main victims on the front line.

We in the Commonwealth of Dominica have long pursued and respected an existence that preserves our little Eden. The Morne Trois Pitons has been a national park for 40 years and a UNESCO World Heritage Site for 20. Our livelihoods are part of our ecosystem. That is how my people and my country earn and survive. But what is our reality at this moment? It is pure devastation, as Dominicans bear the brunt of climate change. I repeat — we are shouldering the consequences of the actions of others, actions that endanger our very existence and all for the enrichment of a few elsewhere.

We dug graves today in Dominica. We buried loved ones yesterday, and I am sure that when I return home tomorrow, we will discover additional fatalities as a consequence of this encounter. Our homes are flattened, our buildings roofless, our water pipes smashed and our road infrastructure destroyed. Our hospital is without power and schools have disappeared beneath the rubble. Our crops are uprooted. Where there was green, there is now only dust and dirt. The desolation is beyond imagination. The stars have fallen. Eden is broken.

The nation of Dominica has come to the General Assembly to declare an international humanitarian emergency — one that is centred in Dominica but also encompasses many of our neighbours, including our sister isle, Antigua, which had to evacuate its citizens from Barbuda. Dominicans have been responsible members of the global community. We have joined all of the major international battles, from the abolition of forced labour to the protection of patents. Yet today 72,000 Dominicans stand on the front line in a war they did not choose, with extensive casualties from a war they did not start.

The time has come for the international community to take a stand and decide whether it will be shoulder to shoulder with those suffering the ravages of climate change worldwide, whether we can mitigate the consequences of unprecedented increases in sea temperatures and levels, whether it will help us rebuild sustainable livelihoods or whether it will merely show some pity right now and afterwards flee, relieved to know that this time it happened to someone else. Today, we, the small nations of the world, need to know who our real friends are, the people who have our backs.

Not all countries are sitting as inactive bystanders. Some of our traditional friends are playing their part. The United Arab Emirates, for example, has risen to the challenge. We commend Sheik Mohammed Al Maktoum, its Prime Minister, for his announcement, in this year of Zayed, that his country will boost the theme of giving by "delivering even more goodness to all parts of the world". Today we invite nations of similar might to follow his lead.

The success of the twenty-first session of Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Paris, was a demonstration of the collective political will of Member States in taking action to combat climate change. One year on, the call to action must be even more urgent if we are to curtail the impact of climate change on us and future generations. We need all humankind, all countries — big and small, developed and developing — to come together to save our planet. We must all live up to our obligations and commitments to do more. Inaction, and even inadequate action, destroys lives. The Green Climate Fund, which was created to help put mitigation measures in place and assist the victims of climate change, is commendable, but much more must be done to aid the countries that continue to bear the brunt of the impact of climate change.

The World Bank established the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility to assist countries that have been affected by natural disasters. Though helpful, the amounts are usually grossly inadequate to rebuild infrastructure and maintain the gains and progress made in economic and social development in the wake of the likes of Hurricanes Maria and Irma, or even in the case of a tropical storm such as Erika, which occurred two years ago. Substantially more funds must therefore be made available to vulnerable countries for loss and damage so they can mitigate the risks associated with future incidents.

The World Bank Facility must be recapitalized for greater coverage by using already committed funds from the Green Climate Fund. That will enable our countries to focus on improving people's lives and supporting the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. It will enable us to rebuild our nation — not as it was, but so that it is far more capable of meeting the realities of rising sea levels and warmer oceans. Not to do so would be to abandon those who have paid a steep price for what others elsewhere have created. It would be to

let 72,000 Dominicans shoulder the world's conscience on climate change on their own.

Today, we ask members not to express their sympathies this week and then hope that our eyes do not meet next week. Let these extraordinary events elicit extraordinary efforts to rebuild nations sustainably. Let them unleash the innovation and creativity of global citizens to spark a new paradigm of green economic development that stabilizes and reverses the consequences of human-induced global warming. Let it spark a thousand points of light, not shame. Let us take serious action against the realities of climate change. I promise that we Dominicans and other Caribbean citizens will play our part.

We are in shock, but we are not bowed. We cry, but we do not despair. We will rise because Dominican people are strong, because Caribbean people are resilient. We will rebuild our Garden of Eden again for our children and for future generations.

As a result of Tropical Storm Erika in 2015, we committed to creating a national vulnerability risk and resilience fund to improve our Government's ability to respond to the impact of natural disasters. It has not yet been capitalized. We intended to transfer funds to it from our own treasury on an annual basis, but our capacity to earn has now been significantly compromised even before we have gotten it off the ground.

Today we need all the things required after a natural disaster that has affected an entire nation. We need water, food and emergency shelter. We need roads, bridges and new infrastructure, but we also need delivery capabilities. I call on those with substantial military capacities to lend us the rescue and rebuilding equipment that may be standing idle, waiting for a war. Let Dominica today be that war, because our landscape currently resembles a war zone. The battle we are in has brought us to our knees. We need resources now so that we can move purposefully towards rebuilding our beautiful island home. We will need to rebuild homes and villages. We will need to rebuild communities, schools, roads and bridges. We will need to rebuild a country, and we cannot do it alone. Above all else, we need the international community. We need its humanity and we need it now to act truly as our United Nations.

The Acting President. On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Public Service of the

Commonwealth of Dominica for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Roosevelt Skerrit, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Public Service of the Commonwealth of Dominica, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President. I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Sushma Swaraj, Minister for External Affairs of the Republic of India.

Ms. Swaraj (India) (*spoke in Hindi; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): Let me begin by offering my heartiest congratulations to Foreign Minister Lajčák on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. For those of us fortunate enough to represent our nations as Foreign Minister, it is a particularly happy event that one of us has this honour.

I addressed the Assembly last year as well (see A/71/PV.22). This year has seen much change both in the Assembly and the world it represents. We have a new Secretary-General at the United Nations who is determined to prepare and strengthen the United Nations to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. We welcome his efforts and see in him a leader who can give practical shape to a vision.

Our world today is trapped in a deluge of troubles of which the most dangerous is surely the relentless rise of violence. The evil of terrorism and the ideas that provoke it are spreading like wildfire. Climate change stares us in the face, and its threat is growing. Maritime security is an increasing worry. For many compelling and terrible reasons, people are leaving the psychological, cultural and economic comfort of their homes to seek refuge on distant shores, giving rise to global anxiety. A large part of the world's population still suffers from hunger and poverty. Young people are beginning to lose hope as they confront unemployment. Women, historically the victims of discrimination, are demanding what they should have — gender empowerment. The danger of nuclear proliferation is back in the headlines. Cybersecurity has become a source of deep insecurity.

In 2015, we set ourselves the target date of 2030 for finding solutions to many of the challenges on our agenda. Two of those years have already passed. Surely it is already time to ask how much has happened. If complacency ends up defining the next 13 years, we

will be in danger of losing control. We need a sense of urgency, as well as unshakable fortitude, if we are to take the decisions that can avert catastrophe. I am pleased that India has displayed the courage and leadership needed to take such tough decisions and launch its interlinked process of sustainable development.

My Government's most important priority is the complete eradication of poverty, and there are two ways of addressing that curse. The traditional method is through incremental levels of aid and hand-holding, but our Prime Minister Narendra Modi has chosen the more radical route, through economic empowerment. The poor are not helpless; we have merely denied them opportunity. We are eliminating poverty by investing in the poor. We are turning them from job-seekers into job-providers. All of our economic programmes have one main purpose — empowering the poor. Jan Dhan, Mudra, Ujjwala, Skill India, Digital India, Clean India, Start-Up India, Stand-Up India — describing them all would take more time than I have at my disposal. I shall therefore dwell only on three core programmes.

The Jan Dhan plan must surely count as the world's largest financial inclusion scheme. Those who had no money were able to open bank accounts with no balance. No other country in the world has enabled even those with no money to have a bank account and passbook. That impossibility has now become possible in India. At least 300 million Indians — almost the equivalent of the population of the United States — who had never crossed the threshold of a bank now have bank accounts. That was, understandably, not easy to complete in three years, but our banks have achieved that visionary goal set by our Prime Minister. While some have still to be included, the target has been set. Every Indian family will have a bank account.

Mudra Yojana has enabled the Government to fund the unfunded. Today, through Mudra, people who had never dreamt that bank credit could be an option for them are getting soft loans without collateral to begin micro-businesses. I am particularly pleased to be able to say that 70 per cent of those loans have gone to women. Unemployment spreads despair. Through Skill India, Start-Up India and Stand-Up India, poor and middle-class youth are being trained to match their talents with bank credit and become self-employed as small-scale entrepreneurs.

Ujjwala is one of the Government's signature schemes. Poor women who had to work hard in the

kitchen were sometimes left blinded by the smoke from their stoves. The poor are being provided with free gas cylinders so that women do not have to suffer the dangerous consequences of wood-fired kitchens. Uniquely, gender emancipation is at the creative core of that programme.

Demonetization was a courageous decision to challenge the black money that disappeared from circulation and was one of the by-products of corruption. India has now also passed legislation for a goods and services tax under which there is one tax throughout the country, without the disorganized and punishing system of multiple taxes under different categories in different parts of the country. Our Save the Girl, Educate the Girl campaign is reducing gender inequality. Our Clean India programme is generating what can only be described as a revolutionary change in social attitudes and habits.

At this point, I would like to note that nations with rising capabilities can generate these kinds of change, but the developed world must become an active partner in helping vulnerable countries that are still mired in stagnant poverty to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) horizon by 2030. That is why the principle of global partnership was included in the SDGs. I am happy to report that this year India has launched an India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund.

Regrettably, while we are fully engaged in fighting poverty, our neighbour Pakistan seems to be engaged only in fighting us. On Thursday, from this rostrum, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi wasted rather too much of his speech (see A/72/PV.14) complaining about us, accusing India of State-sponsored terrorism and violations of human rights. Those listening had only one comment to make — "Look who is talking." The country that has been the world's greatest exporter of havoc, death and inhumanity has become a champion of hypocrisy by preaching about humanity and human rights from this rostrum.

Pakistan's Prime Minister claimed that his nation's founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, bequeathed a foreign policy based on peace and friendship. I would like to remind him that while it remains open to question whether Mr. Jinnah actually advocated such principles, what is beyond doubt is that from the moment India's Prime Minister Modi took his oath of office, he has extended the hand of peace and friendship, and Pakistan's Prime Minister must answer why his

nation has spurned that offer. Prime Minister Abbasi recalled old decisions that have long been overtaken by events, but his memory conveniently failed him where it matters. He has forgotten that under the Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration, India and Pakistan resolved to settle all outstanding disputes and issues bilaterally. The reality is that Pakistan's politicians remember everything but conveniently manipulate those memories. They are masters at forgetting facts that undermine their version of events.

Pakistan's Prime Minister spoke of a comprehensive dialogue between our two countries. I would like to remind him that on 9 December 2015, when I was in Islamabad for the Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference, a decision was made by his leader, Mian Nawaz Sharif, then still Prime Minister, to renew dialogue between us through what he called a comprehensive bilateral dialogue. The word "bilateral" was used consciously to remove any confusion or doubt about the fact that the proposed talks would be between our two nations and only our two nations, without any third party present. Mr. Abbasi must answer why that proposal withered, because Pakistan is responsible for aborting that peace process.

I would just like to ask Pakistan's politicians why it is that although India and Pakistan became free within hours of each other, today India is recognized as an information-technology super-Power and Pakistan only as a pre-eminent exporter of terrorism? Have they ever thought about what the reason for that might be?

There is only one reason for it. India has risen despite being the principal destination for Pakistan's nefarious export of terrorism. There have been many Governments under many parties during the 70 years of Indian freedom, because India has maintained its democracy. Every Government has done its bit for India's development. We have marched ahead consistently, without pause, creating integrated management systems, education and technology services and AIMS foundations in education, health, space and the entire range of human welfare. We have established scientific and technical institutions that are the pride of the world.

But what has Pakistan offered the world or, indeed, its own people, apart from terrorism? We have produced scholars, doctors, engineers and scientists. It has produced terrorists and terrorist camps — Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, Hizbul Mujahideen and the Haqqani Network. What has

Pakistan created? It has created terrorists and jihadists. Doctors save people from death; terrorists send them to their death. Pakistan's terrorist organizations are not only attacking India, they are also affecting two of our neighbours, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

In the history of the General Assembly, it may be a first that a country has asked for a right of reply in order to respond to the statements of three different countries. Does that simple fact not illustrate the reality of Pakistan's actions? If Pakistan had spent on development what it has spent on developing terror, both it and the world would be safer and better off today.

Terrorism is at the very top of the list of problems to which the United Nations is searching for solutions. We are the oldest victim of this terrible, even traumatic terrorism. When we first began pointing to this menace, many of the world's great Powers dismissed it as a law-and-order issue. Now they know better. The question is what we do about it. We must all look within ourselves and ask whether the action we are taking even approaches the level of our talk about it. In bilateral and multilateral discussions we all condemn this evil and piously declare our determination to fight it. The truth is that these statements have become rituals. The fact is that when we are required to fight and destroy this enemy, the self-interest of some makes them duplicitous. That has been going on for years.

Although India had proposed a comprehensive convention on international terrorism as early as 1996, two decades later the United Nations has not been able to agree on a definition of terrorism. If we cannot agree on a definition of our enemy, how can we fight together? If we continue to differentiate between good terrorists and bad, how can we fight together? If even the Security Council cannot agree on the listing of terrorists, how can we fight together?

In all sincerity, I would like to ask the Assembly, through you, Madam, to stop seeing this evil with self-defeating, indeed meaningless nuance. Evil is evil. Let us accept that terrorism is an existential danger to humankind. There is absolutely no justification for such barbaric violence. Let us display our new commitment by reaching an agreement on a comprehensive convention on international terrorism this year.

I have identified climate change as one of the significant dangers to our existence. India has already said that it is deeply committed to the Paris Climate Change Agreement. That is not because we are afraid

of any Power, influenced by friend or foe or tempted by some imagined greed. It is an outcome of a philosophy that is at least 5,000 years old. Our Prime Minister has, on his personal initiative, launched the International Solar Alliance as witness to our abiding commitment to this cause.

When we talk of world peace, we mean peace not only among human beings but also with nature. We understand that human nature is sometimes inimical to nature, but we would like to amend human nature when it tends in the wrong directions. When we inflict our greed on nature, nature sometimes explodes. We must learn to live with the imperatives, cycles and creative urges of nature. In that lies our own salvation.

We have just witnessed hurricanes and earthquakes, rains that inundate and storms that terrify. That is not mere coincidence. Through Hurricane Harvey, Nature sent its warning to the world even before the world's leaders gathered at the United Nations in New York. After our gathering had already begun, an earthquake struck Mexico and a hurricane landed in Dominica. We must understand that this requires more serious action, not more talk. The countries of the developed world must listen more carefully than others, because they have more capacities than others. The developed world must help the less fortunate through technology transfer and Green Climate Fund financing. That is the only way to safeguard future generations.

We have been discussing turmoil and change around the world, but the one Organization created to address world affairs is beset by its own problems. It seems to believe that there is no need for it to make changes in the precepts and perceptions that brought about its birth. On 18 September, I participated in a meeting in New York on United Nations reform and witnessed a clear desire for change and action. But I should also remind the Assembly that at the 2005 World Summit there was a consensus that reforming the Security Council as soon as possible was an essential element of our overall effort to reform the United Nations. Efforts to conduct text-based negotiations on reforming and expanding the Security Council were initiated during last year's session, and more than 160 nations expressed support for them. If we are serious, the least we can do is to produce one text that can be the basis for negotiation. I hope that under the enlightened leadership of the new President of the General Assembly this will become a priority. If it does, that will be a significant achievement.

We also have high expectations of the new Secretary-General. If he wants to reform the Organization's peace and security architecture, he will also have to address the reforms related to United Nations peacekeeping that have long been demanded. Without such improvements, it will be impossible for him to achieve that goal.

There is no shortage of issues and problems that should be acknowledged from this rostrum. But time is not always on the side of those who would like to raise issues and problems in the interests of a better, more peaceful and progressive future. The issues that the President of the General Assembly has chosen are relevant to the Charter of the United Nations as well as to the ancient traditions of my land. My country's culture and thought have been shaped by a history and philosophy that believes in peace as humankind's only rational and practical objective. We truly believe that the world is one family, and we hope that every member of this family deserves that elixir of life that is happiness.

Let me end by reciting a verse that is a synthesis of our thought: "May all be happy; may all be healthy; may all see what is good; may all be free from suffering".

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Djibouti.

Mr. Youssouf (Djibouti) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I would like to take this opportunity to express the hope that under his leadership, the General Assembly will achieve its objectives and to assure him of my country's full support for his efforts.

I would also like to pay tribute to Mr. Peter Thomson, who preceded Mr. Lajčák in his position, and to reiterate our warm congratulations to Secretary-General António Guterres on his well-deserved appointment. We wish him every success as he discharges the lofty mandate that has been entrusted to him.

Notwithstanding its major progress and new opportunities, the world continues to face many challenges. The economic and financial situation remains a source of concern, and the security front is equally worrying. New threats are emerging. The nature of conflict is changing. A number of crises

are worsening and growing ever more complex. Even if climate change sometimes gives rise to scientific controversy, today it is an undeniable reality that is producing one major catastrophe after another. I would like to take this opportunity to convey our sympathy and solidarity with the communities that have been recently affected in the United States, Mexico and the Caribbean.

All of these challenges underscore the crucial importance of sustained and resolute collective action to address them. We must mobilize once more to revitalize multilateralism and stress the central role to be played in it the United Nations. The task is enormous and the responsibility heavy. Such challenges require ambitious reforms and increased resources. The reform undertaken by the Secretary-General in three key areas — the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, management reform, and the reform of the peace and security architecture — is a timely response to the need to make the Organization a tool that can more effectively realize its full potential for serving the people it was created to serve.

The 2030 Agenda is an ambitious programme both for the eradication of poverty and the preservation of the planet. In addition, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Declaration and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda represent an array of tools for strengthening the 2030 Agenda. It also calls on countries to adopt policy frameworks in order to change their modes of production and consumption, as well as strategies to address climate change and disaster risk. With regard to the full and effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Djibouti would like to make a few comments.

First, Africa and the least developed countries should be treated as a priority. As the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has pointed out in its analyses,

(*spoke in English*)

"[Africa is] the battleground where [the Sustainable Development Goals] will be won or lost".

(*spoke in French*)

We must also mobilize large amounts of financing if we are to match these ambitions. To do that, we must

adopt innovative financing mechanisms that not only guarantee increased foreign direct investment but also ensure that development aid commitments are kept. The necessity of that can be demonstrated by careful study of the pledges for financing the Millennium Development Goals, which were not fully honoured, and by the fact that the goal of 0.7 per cent as a portion of gross national income established for official development assistance has not been regularly paid. If it had, by now we would have mobilized \$2.5 trillion. We should also emphasize the importance of an international trade system focused on the three Ps, that is,

(spoke in English)

poor-people-centred, productivity-enhancing and planet-friendly.

(spoke in French)

Lastly, we cannot stress strongly enough the importance of evaluation tools that make it possible to reliably measure progress. Through strong partnership and sustained effort, we can and must work to promote economic growth that is mindful of social justice and respects the environment.

The absence of peace is the major obstacle to economic development. The human cost of conflict is enormous and brings with it massive forced displacement, famine, the spread of communicable diseases, acute food insecurity and a rapid deterioration in respect for human rights. Now more than ever, our Organization has an increased role to play in conflict prevention and the peaceful settlement of disputes. In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's emphasis on such prevention and the reforms under way to restructure the peace and security architecture.

The emergence of extremist terrorist groups perpetrating acts of unprecedented violence poses a new challenge. By disseminating an ideology of intolerance and hatred that calls explicitly for the annihilation of others, they undermine the cohesion of our societies and pose a threat to international peace and security that demands that we coordinate our efforts to combat terrorism.

Djibouti welcomed the recent establishment of the Office of Counter-Terrorism for coordinating United Nations action in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. Djibouti also hosts the Centre of Excellence for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development

(IGAD), designed as a common platform for supporting the strengthening of national and regional coordination, producing analysis and ultimately formulating an action plan aimed at countering extremist rhetoric conveyed through social media.

I would now like to express our views on certain regional and international situations that are high on the agenda for States Members of the United Nations.

Regarding Somalia, Djibouti welcomes the recent political developments in the country and the momentum created by the election in February of President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo and the formation of a new Government. We welcome the many encouraging steps taken to strengthen relations with Somalia's federal member states and the strategy that has been implemented to promote tax and economic reforms aimed at mobilizing domestic resources. However, we stress the importance of increasing support to Somalia by mobilizing adequate funding in support of its development programme. We remain concerned about the proposed cuts in funding to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), despite the consensus on that African peacekeeping operation's success. Care must be taken to ensure that the improvements in the security situation are maintained. AMISOM has brought the Al-Shabaab terrorists to their knees in a bloody defeat.

With regard to South Sudan, we remain concerned by the slow implementation of the August 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The actors involved in that protracted crisis must acknowledge that there can be no military solution to the conflict. In that regard, we support the decision of the thirty-first Extraordinary Summit of IGAD Heads of State and Government on the situation in South Sudan, and reiterate the need for a genuine, transparent and credibly inclusive national dialogue to enable lasting peace to be restored. We also underline the important role played by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan in the quest for a solution to the crisis there and urge all stakeholders to continue their efforts to implement their mandates, while recognizing the importance of complementary and coordinated action.

Turning to Yemen, Djibouti continues to be extremely concerned by the triple tragedy the country is experiencing, as United Nations officials have emphasized in the Security Council — famine, an

unprecedented cholera epidemic and a serious political impasse hindering progress towards peace and security. We urge all parties to return to the negotiating table.

In Palestine, we all know that only a two-State solution can bring peace to the region. The suffering of the Palestinian people has lasted for too long and must end.

Djibouti is also troubled by the fate of the Muslim Rohingya minority in Rakhine state in Myanmar. We are gravely concerned about the military brutality targeting civilian populations and the atrocities that we have all seen in the press. Despite the Government's assurances, the crimes against the Rohingya community have not abated. We support the conclusions of the final report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, led by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and call on Myanmar to fully implement its recommendations without further delay.

Djibouti remains alarmed by North Korea's belligerent and dangerously provocative attitude.

Its multiple ballistic-missile launch tests violate the provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions. Member States should monitor the situation vigilantly. We call on North Korea to engage in a constructive and result-oriented dialogue to find a satisfactory solution to the crisis.

Djibouti is still awaiting the return of the 13 members of its military who have been detained by Eritrea, a neighbour of ours whose belligerent policies towards my country continue. We call on Eritrea to accept the mediation efforts of the African Union in order to demarcate its Ras Doumeira and Doumeira Island borders, begin to build trustworthy relationships with its neighbours and cease the hostile policies that are destabilizing the entire Horn of Africa.

I wish the General Assembly every success in its work.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.



General Assembly

Seventy-second session

20th plenary meeting
Saturday, 23 September 2017, noon
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Lajčák (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at noon.

Agenda item 8 (continued)**General debate**

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Adel Ahmed Al-Jubeir, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Al-Jubeir (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to wish him every success. I would also like to thank Mr. Peter Thomson, President of the Assembly at its seventy-first session, for his efforts throughout his tenure.

I am very pleased to be addressing the Assembly today as my country celebrates its national holiday. We look to the past with pride and are working ambitiously towards the future. Today, I am the messenger of a State that has made its people its top priority and resolutely set forth on a path to sustainable development through creating opportunities, thanks to its fruitful partnerships with friends around the world. Under the leadership of our King, we are helping to establish peace and security in the region and around the world.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the most protracted dispute in the modern history of our region

and has led to innumerable tragedies and endless human suffering. Nothing can justify its continuation, especially when there is an international consensus on the importance of reaching a two-State solution, based on internationally recognized resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, with the goal of establishing an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, within the pre-1967 borders. More than ever we need concerted international determination to make that solution a reality.

We have been tackling the Houthi-Saleh insurgency in Yemen as a coalition in order to help the legitimate Government of Yemen save its people and restore its State in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. That was not a choice for us in Yemen. We resorted to it only after sustained political efforts to maintain Yemen's safety and stability and preserve its territorial integrity and independence. We therefore affirm our full support for the political process in Yemen and will stand by the United Nations and its Special Envoy in their efforts to arrive at a political solution in line with Security Council resolution 2216 (2015) and the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative, and through national dialogue. We are aware of the extent of the humanitarian suffering of our brothers in Yemen since the coup d'état and have spared no effort to come to their aid. In fact, the assistance provided by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in recent years now amounts to more than \$8 billion for every area of humanitarian medical and development needs, funnelled through the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre.

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My country firmly condemns and is gravely concerned about the Government of Myanmar's policy of repression and forced displacement of the Rohingya minority, which runs counter to all respect for humanitarian values and international law. It is a human tragedy that demands an urgent response and should end immediately, in line with the principles on which our Organization was founded. As we urge the Government of Myanmar to honour its obligations and protect its peoples from discrimination, we continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya. King Salman has provided \$15 million to help the displaced, in addition to my country's provision of assistance by taking in more than half a million Rohingya refugees. His Majesty has also personally intervened with neighbouring States and has been working with the Government of Bangladesh to ensure safe passage for the refugees and decent living conditions for them in the various host countries.

Today our international community is facing one of the greatest ever challenges to its security and stability, the threat of terrorism, which is striking all over the world, in defiance of all human rights and values. My country will continue to work steadfastly to counter extremism and terrorism in all their manifestations. The Arab-Islamic-American summit was held in Riyadh in May with that purpose and affirmed unequivocally the importance of pursuing joint efforts to end extremism and terrorism by cutting off their sources of financing. As it happens, the crisis in Qatar is interfering with our policies designed to combat terrorism and extremism and cut off their financing.

Meanwhile, the Syrian crisis is entering its sixth year, and the conflict has already claimed hundreds of thousands of victims. From the beginning, my country has opened its doors to hundreds of thousands of Syrians. In general, the Middle East is going through a period of unprecedented tensions and continuing crises, in which Iran has played a part.

Turning to the crisis in Qatar, we have continued with a firm policy aimed at combating the fostering of extremism and terrorism through Doha's provision of financial support to terrorism, as well as helping it to disseminate violent hate speech. Qatar has also been providing a safe haven for those who have violated the law and must be brought to justice, thereby helping to spread chaos and foment dissension. Our group of four States has demanded firmly that Qatar adhere to the principles of international law where the fight

against terrorism is concerned, including by honouring its obligations under the 2013 Riyadh Agreement and its complementary agreement of 2014, which are all legitimate demands.

In its desire to affirm the principles of the Charter of the United Nations regarding the safeguarding of the peace and security of peoples around the world, my country was one of the first to call for establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. We have also demonstrated the importance we attach to the Sustainable Development Goals and their three economic, social and environmental pillars through our Vision 2030, aimed at enabling our country to achieve sustainable, people-centred development in order to build a more robust economy. And we have always striven to provide support to developing countries by providing official development assistance totalling 0.7 per cent of our gross national income.

In conclusion, I would like to thank those who are helping people everywhere, wherever they are, and who are working for peace.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Darren Allen Henfield, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Mr. Henfield (Bahamas): On behalf of the people and the Government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, I would like to congratulate the President on his election to lead the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to assure him of my country's full support and cooperation during his tenure. I would also like to sincerely congratulate his predecessor, Ambassador Peter Thomson, on his stewardship of the Assembly during the seventy-first session.

The Bahamas congratulates Mr. António Guterres on his recent appointment as Secretary-General, with the daunting task of continuing the implementation of the bold and ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I commend him for the work he has done so far in steering the work of the Organization and assure him of the full support of the Bahamas.

Since 29 September 1729, when the first meeting of the Parliament of the Bahamas took place, democratic values have taken deep root throughout the archipelago. On 10 May this year, the Bahamas conducted its eleventh consecutive round of general

elections since our establishment of universal suffrage in 1962. The people of the Bahamas, in a free, peaceful and democratic process, elected a Government led by Mr. Hubert Minis. The new Administration is made up almost exclusively of new members, one of them as young as 21 years old. We promised our people bold change and we are committed to fulfilling that promise. We stand on the threshold of advancing a new agenda as demanded by our people, one that has at its core the protection and promotion of the rights, interest and welfare of all Bahamians — women, men, young people and children. I am therefore proud today to make my first address to this organ as the most recently appointed Foreign Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas under this new administration.

Economies large and small are facing very difficult times, where myriad factors challenge our capacity to create an environment where people can be assured of sustainable livelihoods, security, safety and a promising future for succeeding generations. Very troubling are the insidious increase in international terrorism; unfair practices in the international financial sector, such as de-risking and correspondent banking; crime; trafficking in persons, drugs and weapons; gross violations of human rights; and reprehensible corruption by those who have been entrusted to govern.

Of special concern to small island developing States (SIDS) are the dangers of environmental degradation and climate change, which threaten our very survivability. With what we have witnessed just recently with the passage of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and now Maria, I cannot underscore sufficiently the importance the Bahamas attaches to combating climate change and the preservation and protection of the environment. Even while these hurricanes were occurring, earthquakes took place in Mexico, resulting in further tragic loss of life and destruction. Climate change is global. We have expressed before and today we reiterate our thoughts and prayers to all adversely impacted by these devastating events.

I need to emphasize that this is the third time in three years that the Bahamas has been hit by a major hurricane, and Maria is still churning in our territory. There are two more months before the end of the hurricane season, and we can only pray that we will be spared further destruction and loss. Hurricane Irma changed course and did not directly hit the entire Bahamian archipelago, thereby minimizing the impact on our tourism industry. However, we were not entirely

spared. Our southern islands experienced serious damage. Ragged Island was totally devastated and is now uninhabitable. Additionally, tornadoes inflicted considerable damage on the northern islands of Bimini and Grand Bahama.

We are grateful to our international partners, which provided immediate support after the passage of Hurricane Irma and now continue to stand by our side as we begin the painful and burdensome process of restoration and rebuilding. I commend the President and the Secretary-General for convening the recent high-level meeting to allow those of us impacted to bring focus on these events to our other partners.

One of the countries immediately affected by Hurricane Irma was the Republic of Cuba, which, as on previous occasions, caused this massive hurricane to lose some of its energy and probably lessened its impact on our neighbour, the United States of America. All developing countries affected have been placed on a short list for assistance to shore up their internal conditions towards recovery. Cuba does not enjoy this capacity to the fullest. The Bahamas joins other nations in calling for the United States Congress to reconsider the legislative barriers to the biggest of the Caribbean islands in order for it to develop to its fullest potential as a member of the international community.

It is the intention of the Government, working with the private sector, to create out of the destruction of Ragged Island the first fully green island in the region, utilizing renewable energy and smart technologies, from solar energy to sustainable water-purification systems, to create a more sustainable and resilient island community.

The implications for the existence of SIDS such as the Bahamas, as we are confronted with global warming, rising sea-levels, more severe and frequent hurricanes and other extreme weather events, are all too clear. For the first time in its history, the Bahamas evacuated whole communities to safe quadrants ahead of Hurricane Irma. What happens next — a wholesale evacuation of the entire Caribbean? I call on the international community to recognize the imperative of accelerating efforts to deal urgently with the adverse impact of climate change, and to do so in a coordinated way. Only then will we mitigate against these ferocious and frequent destructive weather events, which now potentially threaten to add to the world's migration issues.

Well over two decades ago, my Government, recognizing the very real threat posed to our very existence, upgraded its human capital capacity to address the unintended consequences of climate change and its commitment to environmental conservation. Through its many marine protected areas, the Bahamas is committed to the conservation of sustainable oceans, as well as through our active involvement in initiatives, such as the 10x20 initiative, and our participation in the consultative process of biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction. In this context, the Bahamas has presented its candidature once again for a seat on the Council of the International Maritime Organization in category C.

The continuing imperative for us in the Bahamas and the Caribbean is the re-evaluation of the measurements used to determine economic well-being. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its policy brief on vulnerability and debt in small States, recognized that many SIDS face an uncertain future. The Bahamas continues to dispute the use of per capita gross domestic product/gross national product as an instrument to measure wealth and economic development. The use of this one-dimensional instrument prohibits countries that are most in need from receiving development assistance or loans at concessional rates. It is time for us to replace that metric with a realistic measurement that takes into account the vulnerability and fragility of SIDS to exogenous shocks.

Notwithstanding our best efforts at self-sufficiency, exogenous shocks in the form of reduced correspondent banking relationships continue to create challenges for the region. International banking institutions, fearing that they may be subject to fines and sanctions related to the illicit activities of money-laundering and terrorist financing, have pulled out en masse. Citizens in our region depend on the services provided by these entities and have now become severely disadvantaged as a result of the actions taken. This threatens our ability to remain competitive as one of the leading international centres and hinders our efforts to expand our trading relations.

The head of the IMF, Ms. Christine Lagarde, spoke convincingly in 2016 on the subject of correspondent banking, highlighting that all stakeholders had to uphold their end of the bargain. For its part, the Bahamas has invested in a strong compliance regime, at great financial cost. We invite the international community to work together to find another way to deal with the

issue and allow input from those to be impacted by their decisions before moving the goal post yet again.

Despite the challenges faced, the Government of the Bahamas remains committed to a comprehensive development agenda for the country. With the launch of the national development plan Vision 2040 in the coming months, we will set a course towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In this connection, the Bahamas has committed to participating in the voluntary national review process at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, in 2018. We appreciate the support of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in this regard. Indeed, it is through this anticipated integrated framework that we shall address the range of challenges that face our nation.

The scourges of terrorism and trafficking in arms of all types continue to impact our way of life. The Bahamas reaffirms its commitment to standing with the international community in the fight against terrorism in all its forms. We also stand in solidarity with the peoples of France, Spain, Belgium and the United Kingdom, who have recently experienced horrific terrorist attacks. Violence in the furtherance of political aims is never the answer. Only through dialogue and negotiations will aspirations be realized.

I spoke earlier about the importance of accountability, truth and transparency in Government and the importance of the rule of law to good governance. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime,

“Corruption is a global phenomenon found in all countries — but evidence shows it harms poor people more than others, stifles economic growth and diverts desperately needed funds from education, health care and other public services. An estimated \$1 trillion get siphoned off through bribes every year, according to the World Bank.”

The Government of the Bahamas has firmly committed itself to eradicating criminality and corruption. We are resolved to have in place an efficient, results-based public sector, with an Office of the Ombudsman, in order to create the best environment possible for promoting economic development, foreign

direct investment, small business development and equal opportunity for all to share in prosperity.

The role of the United Nations in advancing human rights has been essential. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a series of international instruments, human rights operations on the ground and the various human rights bodies, such as the Human Rights Council, permit the United Nations to continue as a beacon to promote and protect human rights through both immediate and long-term action.

We in the Bahamas are committed to protecting and promoting the rights of Bahamians and, indeed, all humankind. The achievements of the Bahamas relative to human rights have derived from collaboration with all stakeholders and a willingness to explore fresh approaches to long-standing challenges. Within that context, I am pleased to announce that the Bahamas is seeking election to the Human Rights Council for the term 2019-2021. As a member of the Council and a small island developing State, the Bahamas will bring to that body a fresh, distinct and constructive perspective, with the potential to add depth and richness to human rights advancement and discourse.

The Government of the Bahamas believes that education must be at the heart of driving sustainable development, where we build resilience and an educated, inclusive and diverse workforce and community. That has positive implications for the creativity, innovation and productivity that allow learners and young people to fulfil their potential to act as agents of social change. For that reason, our Government has designed an education agenda that encourages life-long learning and recognizes the potential of technology and digital platforms to serve as tools in the teaching and learning process.

I take this opportunity to bring to the attention of the Assembly the fact that the Bahamas, in recognition of the invaluable role of technology and communications in education and all aspects of development, has presented its candidature for a seat on the Council of the International Telecommunication Union.

The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted in September 2016 by the General Assembly, called for the development of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. We commend the ongoing work in preparation for the global compact. While recognizing the potential yields of global migration relative to the reduction of

poverty and global inequality, we believe that proper cooperation, through the appropriate mechanisms, can help to ensure that migration occurs through safe and regulated channels, to the benefit of all countries involved.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the targets to be achieved with respect to non-communicable diseases and the need to mobilize the necessary financing. We also recognize the successes experienced in the global AIDS response, and caution the international community, at this important juncture, to resist complacency and continue to offer support to achieve targets and to sustain the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS.

The Bahamas supports the work of peacekeeping operations and the Department under which they fall as a fundamental instrument to build, protect and maintain peace and security within the United Nations.

We note the approach of the termination of the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the establishment of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti. As was the case with MINUSTAH, the Bahamas looks forward to doing its part to support Haiti's continued national development. We also join the continued support and engagement of the international community in Haiti.

During the main session, the General Assembly will consider and approve the programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019. It is our expectation that the General Assembly will, in a transparent and constructive manner, approve a budget that aligns with the mandates and activities of the United Nations. We welcome the Secretary-General's initial efforts to promote management reform aimed at strengthening service delivery. We encourage the Secretary-General, in the execution of the budget, to continue to find innovative means to advance an efficient implementation of mandates, but without arbitrary cuts.

The Bahamas values the role of the United Nations as the custodian of the interests of the world's people, in particular the poor and the vulnerable. We believe that the Charter of the United Nations remains a viable and firm foundation onto which global peace and security, social progress and economic development can be built.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Alan Peter Cayetano, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines.

Mr. Cayetano (Philippines): Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God. The path to peace must be walked with patience. In order to achieve any purpose with others, be they Powers or people, patience is needed. The opposite of patience is impatience, which is the cause and aggravation of conflict.

Someone said that to jaw-jaw is better than to war-war. Listening is even better than talking. We must listen to others more than we listen to ourselves. Hopefully, we know what we are talking about, but others may know what we do not. We can learn only if we stop talking and listen. We may think that we know how others can do things better than they themselves have done it. Maybe our way is more efficient. But the time gained by that efficiency will be time lost convincing others that our way is better, rather than reaching a compromise between our way and theirs.

Real change in the world order necessitates cooperation. Nothing affecting others can be undertaken without their willing involvement and getting their agreement on the purpose and manner of the change. Achieving a shared purpose beyond any single person's ability requires cooperation. But how else can we get cooperation, if not with the patience to explain why it is needed and the equal patience to listen? That is why we have the United Nations, the largest cooperative endeavour in human history. We use the United Nations to speak out, but more importantly to listen. And somehow, we arrive at a consensus or at the very least a *modus vivendi* on how to proceed in peace and, therefore, with greater prospects for progress.

The theme for this year's session, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", captures a promise that everyone who has stood here has vowed to fulfil for his or her own people, as well as for the rest of the peoples of the United Nations, as the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations puts it. Yet, after 72 years, while much has been achieved, much more has to be done. The promise is still very much a work in progress. We, the peoples of the United Nations, battle new threats that undermine the success that we have achieved and frustrate progress in peace, development and human rights — the three pillars of the United Nations.

The theme mirrors the Philippines' own people-centred agenda, as articulated by our President Rodrigo Roa Duterte. President Duterte and the Filipino people

are committed to real change in order to finally carry out long-needed reforms, address long-ignored national threats and protect the human rights of all Filipinos while doing our part to attain regional peace and stability. We remain true to our obligations under the international treaties we have ratified. We have made many sacrifices as a nation and as a people, and we shall continue to do so for peace and prosperity.

The Philippines integrates the human rights agenda into its development initiatives for the purpose of protecting everyone, especially the most vulnerable — families, women and children, the poor, indigenous people, migrant workers, the elderly and persons with disabilities — from lawlessness, violence and anarchy. That is why we have a massive campaign to restore the rule of law by fighting corruption, crime and illegal drugs. We owe it to the 10 million Filipinos working overseas to keep their children and families safe. We owe it to all Filipino families and other States with nationals living in our country to keep the Philippines safe. The very principle of the responsibility to protect must encompass, first and foremost, the vast majority of peaceful, law-abiding people who need protection from those who are not. It is for their safety and sustenance that States exist, and for which Governments and leaders are responsible.

President Duterte said the fewest words and made the fewest promises in the campaign. Why? Because he listened. He listened and he heard what none of the other candidates would listen to. The vast majority of the Filipino people felt vulnerable in their lives and livelihoods, and unsafe in the rising drug-driven criminality that threatened those least able to protect themselves. These people whom past Governments had least protected are the poor and ordinary folk.

The Philippines' comprehensive campaign against illegal drugs is a necessary instrument to preserve and protect the human rights of all Filipinos. It is never an instrument to violate the human rights of any individual or group. It was noted by President Trump in this Hall that

"we do expect all nations to uphold the two core sovereign duties to respect the interests of their own people and the rights of every other sovereign nation" (A/72/PV.3, p. 10).

This is as true in bilateral relations between sovereign countries as when they combine multilaterally on a common decision or action. The Philippines is a

sovereign country; indeed, it was the first subject nation to win its independence, however short-lived, thereby earning the honour of being the first republic in Asia.

We expect our sovereignty to be respected and our democratically elected Government's assessment of threats and how to go about addressing them to be accorded pre-eminence among nations. Is it too much to ask for the benefit of the doubt, at the very least? We prize sovereignty in all its aspects. We acknowledge the wisdom embodied in the words spoken by President Trump in this Hall: "All responsible leaders have an obligation to serve their own citizens" (*ibid.*, p. 11). In keeping with that obligation, it is the State's duty to protect human life, human dignity, and human rights from aggression by other States, terrorism from non-State actors and the destruction of societies and families from criminal networks trafficking in drugs, people and arms.

As a responsible leader, the President of the Philippines launched a vigorous campaign against the illegal drug trade to save lives, preserve families, protect communities and stop the country from becoming a narco-State — an epidemic would spell the end of sovereignty in any meaningful sense. As of August 2017, the drug trade had penetrated at least 24,848 barangays, representing 59 per cent of the 42,036 smallest Government units spanning our archipelago — those directly in touch with our people. It is estimated that 4 to 7 million people have used or are becoming dependent on drugs. Where is sovereignty in a country where vast numbers are addicted to drugs and enslaved by their suppliers?

To be sure, drug addiction calls for cure and not chastisement. When the President showed his fierce determination to end the drug menace, 1.3 million drug users turned themselves in. Their constitutional rights were fully respected, and those who wanted a cure or rehabilitation were offered such options. But the neglect of the drug problem by previous Governments has left the current one hard-pressed to rehabilitate them all. We are grateful that generous souls at home and abroad are building centres around the country, and we sincerely thank them.

While drug addiction calls for rehabilitation, drug trafficking surely calls for stern measures, though always consistent with the rule of law. The President has and will always have zero tolerance for abusive

police officers, as time will show — I repeat, our President has zero tolerance for any type of abuse, be it drug abuse, abuse of human rights, abuse of our laws or abuse by State actors, including our policemen.

But accusations before investigation do not constitute proof, nor are they fair. Abuses have occurred and mistakes have been made — tragic ones, for sure. While one abuse is one too many, still there are far fewer abuses than the imaginary numbers claimed by partisan accusers and publicity-seekers. The drug trade has even penetrated law enforcement and our courts, and yet the message we receive is that the best way to prevent abuse in the anti-drug campaign is to stop the campaign and live with drugs instead.

But we cannot live with drugs, because drugs will not let us live. Headlines today depict human rights abuse, but what about the headlines from yesterday, or last week? Two-year-olds, 4-year-olds and 6-year-olds were raped; mothers sold their children to feed their drug addictions; and children shot their parents because they believed them to be the devil.

The problem is that the West sometimes thinks that the kind of drugs that are present in its societies — heroin, cocaine and marijuana — are the same drugs that we are talking about. We are talking about methamphetamine hydrochloride, otherwise known as shabu, which both the United Nations and the World Health Organization have said is associated with violence and paranoia. With cocaine, heroin and marijuana, the drug war is among the suppliers, but with methamphetamines, the war is within the family and every family affected by these drugs is a victim.

We can no more live with drugs than we can with terrorism which, as the United Nations admits — and as we have discovered — is funded by the drug trade. This has created the new phenomenon of criminal insurgency. In the century before last, a huge and well-populated Asian country was enslaved by a maritime Power that flooded it with drugs. We welcome this opportunity to address the international community's concerns and correct the perceptions gleaned from media reports that deny the real scale of the problem, as if denial were a solution. The problem is huge and we will not reduce it in our imagination because we dare not face it in reality.

Appeasement emboldens evil. We counsel patience, but delay will make the problem bigger until it is

beyond containment and control. Indeed, as we heard from President Trump in this Hall,

"When decent people and nations become bystanders to history, the forces of destruction only gather power and strength" (*ibid*).

We will not slide down the slope of complacency in wilful ignorance of the threat posed to our country and our people by the drug trade.

In the past four years, we have seen the rise of the Islamic State and how it has spread its nihilistic ideology beyond Iraq and Syria to become a serious threat to the whole world. We should have no illusions that the threat posed by the Islamic State will end with the collapse of its self-proclaimed caliphate in Iraq, and very soon in Syria. Rather, we should all be ready to confront a very potent threat that has spread to other parts of the world.

In the Philippines, we have discovered the intimate and symbiotic relationship between terrorism, poverty and the illegal drug trade. Terrorists were somehow able to bring together an assortment of extremists, criminals, mercenaries and foreign fighters who attempted, but failed, to take over the great city of Marawi. That was part of their grand plan to establish in South-East Asia an extension or province of their shattered caliphate in the Middle East.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines shall regain full control of Marawi from the Islamic State-inspired terrorists. Their protracted hold of their remaining several square metres of the city is largely a result of superior arms that were illegally obtained and the presence of civilian hostages, used by them as human shields. There is also the Government's forbearance to unleash greater force in order to avoid collateral loss of life. The fight has been terrible, but the effort has been patient and careful to spare the innocent. There has been less talk and more listening to those with the most at stake in the struggle — the people of Marawi. The disturbance will soon be over and the rebuilding of Marawi will begin shortly.

Terrorism is a global problem that no country can tackle alone, although here at the United Nations it has been noted with some admiration that Filipino families outside the conflict zone quickly absorbed most of the 200,000 displaced civilians. Our main disaster preparedness is Filipino compassion. The Filipino family system is strong, the *bayanihan* system is alive,

and cooperation is a tradition of the Philippines. Help from fellow Filipinos is always at hand. While the main burden is borne by our Government and people and all the risks are taken by our soldiers, we are thankful for the assistance extended to us by the international community. From the bottom of my heart, I thank all who have helped, are continuing to help and have promised help. I thank those dear friends for helping when we needed it most.

The Philippines welcomes the creation of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism to bring together, as a cohesive whole, the work of Member States and the United Nations on counter-terrorism. It will be a sharing of experience and sober reflection rather than of blind anxieties. That is where real results will be achieved. As a founding Member of the United Nations, the Philippines has been a strong advocate of the rule of law. We uphold the core of the United Nations mission to draw upon the strength and sovereign equality of its Members to achieve their common goals.

Centuries ago, ambitions to take land resulted in long and terrible wars. The battle has shifted to the seas; hence the need to affirm our commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea as the international law governing the rights and responsibilities of States parties in their use of the world's oceans. The issues — including territorial claims, sovereignty rights, security, and the protection of marine life and resources, to name a few — are undoubtedly numerous, intertwined and complex.

Dialogue, building trust and promoting cooperation are the way forward in addressing maritime disputes. This year, as Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Philippines looks forward to successful negotiations on the long-overdue code of conduct in the West Philippine Sea/South China Sea. We fully thank our ASEAN neighbours, the individual ASEAN States and China for their utmost cooperation in that endeavour. Again, in this work, it is essential to have patience, to listen and to be willing to work with, rather than against, each other.

We live in a global community, and we are citizens of the world. Today, our social contract is no longer confined to our nation State. In our region, we exert efforts to build bridges and not walls; to emphasize commonalities and not differences; to think less that we are Filipinos, Thai, Indonesian, Japanese, Koreans or Chinese, and to think more of ourselves as Asian.

Beyond being Asians, we are global citizens — the people of the United Nations.

Human rights and the dignity of every person are the main pillars of the United Nations and of the Philippines, too. As a very spiritual people, we are united in believing that man and woman were created in God's image. There can be no compromise of human rights for those who break the law, nor for those who are their victims. We also believe in accountability, especially in the practical conviction that as we sow, so shall we reap.

We should never tolerate human rights abuses, but neither should we tolerate misinformation or fake news on or the politicization of human rights, as those undermine our collective efforts as the United Nations to uphold the universality of human rights and dignity of human life. But why debate security versus human rights? Security and human rights are not incompatible. Indeed, the former is our duty to the latter. Without security, the most basic human rights to life and safety are constantly under attack from terrorism, criminality, drug trafficking and human trafficking.

Much has been said about ASEAN, which is identified with words such as cooperation, consultation and consensus. Critics have remarked on the slowness of ASEAN's way of proceeding. Yet, as slow as ASEAN's progress has been, it has been solid, substantive and irreversible, precisely because of the patience with which it is made. It is thereby proving to be a consensus-based organization that is working, and working well.

Five decades ago, South-East Asia was marred by conflicts, and all previous attempts at South-East Asian regionalism proved extremely difficult, if not impossible for some. Our different cultures, differing ideologies and different political systems only reinforced that pessimistic outlook. Fifty years later, the ASEAN miracle prevails with greater political and economic prospects that have gripped global interest. ASEAN has overcome the divisions, fears and hostilities of the past. We have used regional cooperation to promote growth, development, integration and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Today, the Philippines patiently builds stronger relationships with the international community through ASEAN and the United Nations. We remain a friend to all and an enemy to none. We are here to bridge and build a more peaceful, secure and stable world. There is no development without peace and no peace

without development. That is what the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides for. It serves as the template of the Philippines development plan, called *AmBisyon Natin 2040*, or *Our Ambition 2040*.

While the Philippines has experienced unprecedented economic growth, we are adopting measures to make growth more inclusive through massive poverty-alleviation programmes that are creating more jobs, driving innovation and making quality education universally available — relevant education that imparts training and skill-building to make people resilient in changing markets, building greater trust in Government and hopes for raising tens of millions of Filipinos from poverty.

There is a link between increasing poverty, corruption and a deteriorating environment. President Rodrigo Roa Duterte seeks to reverse that linkage by addressing the adverse effects of climate change — to which the Philippines is most vulnerable — through disaster-risk reduction and the strict implementation of laws protecting the environment. He is equally decisive on abuses that damage our environment.

To honour the immense sacrifices of our 10 million Filipinos abroad, and all other migrant workers of the world who make huge sacrifices so that their families may have a better life, we press on with our advocacy for a global compact on migration. As we seek to improve conditions for foreign nationals living and working in the Philippines, we advocate the fundamental concept of loving our neighbour as we love ourselves. We call on the United Nations to elevate migration on its agenda.

If we listen to each other, we will hear the same thing. We have no need for nuclear weapons. Again, we have no need for nuclear weapons. There is absolutely no benefit to another Cold War or to an arms race. We want nuclear weapons to be a thing of the past, and we do not want an arms race in any part of the world.

On 7 July, the Philippines joined 121 other Member States in securing our world from weapons of mass destruction by adopting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Three days ago, I had the privilege of signing the Treaty on behalf of the Philippines. The Philippines calls on Member States with nuclear weapons to likewise sign on in order to find a way to provide the world with security without the threat of mass destruction. We can have a safe world only if we get rid of all nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. By doing so, we shall save succeeding

generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind.

The Philippines, on its own and as this year's Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, has expressed its grave concern over the growing tensions on the Korean peninsula because of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's missile test launches and detonations. The Philippines joins the call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to put a stop to its provocations, which bring us closer to an unimaginable scenario — a war to end all wars because no one will be left to fight new ones.

Let me end where I began, and call again for patience, listening and cooperation, focused always on the well-being of, as stated in the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations, "We, the peoples of the United Nations". Let us listen to each other as we all are the people of the United Nations. Our faith and destiny as human beings on this planet are intertwined.

In a situation like the present, where every finger in and around the Korean peninsula is on a trigger and every eye is on the lookout for a wrong move, the likelihood of a surprise attack is virtually zero. In that context, no one can be caught by surprise and unprepared to strike back. So what is there to lose by going on talking and listening until the very last moment, in the hope that a resolution will be found?

Patience, listening as much as talking, and cooperation among friends and even enemies are the signposts on the path of peace. Peace is about people. No people and no country can have a national identity if there are no others that can tell the difference. Without people — each one different, yet all the same in their being and in the good they seek — it is impossible to imagine the world. To utter the phrase "the world" means a planet with many peoples sharing it.

All of us are pieces of a giant puzzle. We seek to be completed by being pieced together, thereby creating a whole, beautiful picture. In a war of all against all, of every one against the other, the last man standing is not at peace; rather, he is simply a single piece. He is not the victor; he is simply alone.

I congratulate the President on his election, and he can count on the support of the Philippines.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore.

Mr. Balakrishnan (Singapore): I am honoured to speak here on behalf of one of the world's smallest city States, the Republic of Singapore. First, I congratulate His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I also congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson of Fiji on his successful leadership as President at the seventy-first session.

We are meeting at a time of great uncertainty. The old fault lines of race, language and religion remain active. There is renewed anxiety about jobs and inequality. New technologies and non-State actors are challenging the international order. Terrorist groups are using the Internet to spread their poisonous, radical ideologies, including in South-East Asia. Cyberattacks and fake news have proliferated. Conflicts in many regions of the world remain and new ones have emerged.

In North-East Asia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's reckless actions are raising tensions on the Korean peninsula. Singapore strongly condemns the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's missile and nuclear-weapon tests, which are in flagrant violation of Security Council resolutions. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to avoid further provocations and to fully implement all of the resolutions adopted by the Security Council.

In Myanmar's Rakhine state, a humanitarian disaster has occurred in the aftermath of a terrorist attack on 25 August and related acts of violence. It is a complex, intercommunal issue with deep historical roots, and it will not be solved instantly. It is the responsibility of every Government to protect every civilian, regardless of ethnicity, religious beliefs or origin. I visited Nay Pyi Taw last week and had a very frank discussion with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. She is deeply troubled by what is happening in her own country and deeply distressed by the pain and suffering there.

Extremists everywhere actually have a common playbook. First, they commit an egregious act of violence. Secondly, they stick a religious label on the situation in order to convey a sense of "us versus them". Thirdly, they eliminate the grey zone of moderates by causing alienation due to overreaction. And so, we must be very careful that we do not fall into the trap of those extremists. As a doctor, I believe that the first rule of medicine is to do no harm. Therefore, as the rest of the world looks on with distress and alarm, we need to be very careful and measured in our response.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers will be meeting later today. ASEAN supports Myanmar in seeking a long-term solution to restore stability within its own borders. Singapore will work through ASEAN and with Myanmar to extend humanitarian assistance to all affected communities.

Every country actually seeks to achieve the same thing — to ensure the security and prosperity of our people and to create a better future for our children. But no country, no matter how wealthy, big or powerful, can achieve that alone. Multilateralism, international law, constructive interdependence and a sense of win-win cooperation are crucial to the sustainable development and prosperity for all countries. Therefore, a strong multilateral system reinforces the resilience of individual countries. This is particularly true for small States because we depend on a rules-based multilateral system for our survival and our success.

Today, I want to speak, first, on the importance of multilateralism; secondly, on having an open global architecture; and thirdly, on having inclusive economic growth.

My first point is on a universal, rules-based multilateral system and why it is essential if we are to solve the complex problems facing the world today. No nation can solve transboundary problems alone. We need to work with each other, we need to build consensus and we need to find effective solutions to global problems. The United Nations plays a critical role in that regard as a platform for cooperation, based on the principles of mutual respect, mutual benefit and international law. In fact, the United Nations is the universal body best placed to address the problems of the global commons. A good example is the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982, which is an enduring testament to what collective political will can achieve. Today, UNCLOS has become a constitution that governs the use of the oceans.

The recent adoption of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development showed that multilateralism can respond to new challenges, especially when there is political will and collective commitment. When dealing with global issues such as climate change, there is no alternative to a multilateral approach. The United Nations must also deal with emerging global

challenges, such as cybersecurity, counter-terrorism and the economic disruption caused by the emergence of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence and the potential for genetic engineering.

If the United Nations is to remain effective and relevant, it must also become fit for purpose. There is much scope to optimize synergies and minimize inefficiencies within the United Nations system. In this regard, Singapore strongly supports the Secretary-General's efforts to reform and restructure the United Nations. We welcome his management reforms and his efforts to review the United Nations development system so as to streamline the peace and security architecture.

As a small State, Singapore has always been a strong supporter of an effective United Nations. This year, we are proud that the Forum of Small States, founded by Singapore in 1992, celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary. Singapore is committed to working closely with all States, especially small States, to support the work of the United Nations and to enhance its effectiveness. Regional organizations are also an important part of an effective multilateral, rules-based system. They help to reinforce the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to underpin international law at the regional and local levels. Equally important, they help to build confidence and encourage habits of cooperation.

In South-East Asia, ASEAN is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary. ASEAN has not only fostered regional economic integration, but perhaps even more important, it has secured regional peace for five decades and strengthened the national resilience of each of its members by creating a sense of common identity in the midst of great diversity. The prospects for ASEAN are very bright, and we have ambitious plans to do more, under our vision of a united, resilient and innovative ASEAN.

My second and related point concerns the need for an open global architecture that is essential for growth and sustainable development. We have to make a choice. One model is a world divided by rival blocs, running mercantilist economies, waging proxy wars and engaging in zero-sum competition. There is another model — one where there is a vision of a world with open, interdependent, sovereign States characterized by enlightened long-term national interests, win-win collaboration and sustainable development.

It should come as no surprise that Singapore, almost by definition, has to support the latter model. We believe that an open, rules-based, multilateral system allows every country to fulfil its potential and its duty to its citizens. In particular, it allows small States, which are dependent on international trade and investments, to create a pathway for growth and resilience. It is therefore important, especially at this time, to remain steadfast in the face of growing cause for rising protectionism.

An open trading environment has allowed developing countries to export their goods and services and raised hundreds of millions of people from poverty into a new, rising middle class. Equally important, this rise of a prosperous middle class across Asia, Africa and South America has also been associated with peace and stability. The World Trade Organization is indispensable, as it underpins the rules-based multilateral trading system and provides a framework for resolving trade disputes.

The Group of Twenty (G-20) is another important platform for discussing global macroeconomic and financial issues. However, it is important for the G-20 to work closely with the United Nations and with non-members of the G-20 in order to strengthen the multilateral system and to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. We welcome the efforts of successive G-20 Presidents to reach out to non-members, in particular members of the Global Governance Group. The Group will continue to be an advocate for a more accountable and inclusive framework of global governance.

My third and final point is on the need for inclusive economic growth. Politically, the consensus for multilateralism and an open global architecture will not be sustained if people within our own States feel that they are going to be left behind. In other words, we need to make sure that there is inclusive economic growth that lifts all communities together. Indeed, the 2030 Agenda is fundamentally a vision for achieving long-term inclusive economic growth, not just at the national level, but at the regional and global levels as well. It is a vision shared by all countries. However, the challenge for every Government is to generate higher growth and to create more jobs while ensuring that no one is left behind.

In Singapore, quite frankly, we believe firmly in the role of hard work, savings and self-reliance. However,

we also believe in taking care of the weak and vulnerable in every segment of our society. Consequently, our policies on women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities are designed to protect and uplift the most vulnerable. We place great emphasis on racial and religious harmony and in building social cohesiveness.

Beyond resilience, successful societies have to embrace new technologies and encourage innovation. The digital revolution is fundamentally changing the way we live, work, play, communicate, mobilize and organize our societies. We cannot wish away those disruptive changes. Instead, we have to restructure our economies and our societies, so that we can create new, better jobs for our people in this new digital world. However, that will not be an easy task; it does not come about because of a speech or two.

The transformation caused by the digital revolution will be positive only if we can find ways to share the benefits more widely and to reduce inequality. It is worth remembering that at the beginning of every industrial or technological revolution there is often a period of widening inequality, because the people or the countries who experience it first have an enormous advantage. It takes time for new tools and technologies to be democratized and commoditized so that a new middle class arises, bringing in a new golden age. We need to do the same with this new revolution. That is why we in Singapore have invested heavily in education and skills, training our people, both young and old, to give everyone a chance to maximize opportunities and to harvest new potential from this new digital revolution. We want every Singaporean to have a stake in our growth and to share in our success as a nation.

Let me conclude by saying that the United Nations is absolutely essential, particularly for small States such as Singapore. The United Nations has been a catalyst for peace and development for more than 70 years. It has given a young State like Singapore, just 52 years old, enormous opportunities for amazing progress over the past five decades. It has made a real difference to the lives of people around the world.

In an environment of increased uncertainties, the case for multilateralism becomes stronger, not weaker. Now more than ever, we need the United Nations to help us find solutions to difficult, complex problems, global and local. We need to safeguard and strengthen our multilateral, rules-based system so that even the smallest State can survive and thrive as an independent,

sovereign nation. We need an open global architecture based on a vision of an interdependent world in order to secure, sustainable prosperity for every single one of us. But most important, we need inclusive and fair economic growth to empower all our people to lead good and meaningful lives.

The Acting President: I now call on his Excellency Sheikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Sheikh Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (spoke in Arabic): At the outset, I wish to wholeheartedly congratulate Mr. Lajčák and his friendly country, Slovakia, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its current session and to pledge our full cooperation in the discharge of the duties with which he is entrusted. We are fully confident that, thanks to his insight and clear vision, he will successfully conduct the business of this session. I also wish to praise his choice of theme for this session, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". This important theme meets the expectations of all countries and peoples. I also take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, for his able and competent presidency of the previous session.

I renew my congratulations to Secretary-General António Guterres and applaud his tireless efforts, as reflected in his important report on the work of the Organization (A/72/1), in which he demonstrates his resolve to reform its structure and management, enhance its role in the consolidation of international peace and security, and support sustainable development in response to the challenges and changing circumstances confronting us. In that connection, I also applaud the efforts of His Excellency President Donald Trump of the United States of America to support the reform of the United Nations. The Kingdom of Bahrain was among the first countries to sign the political declaration he initiated in support of the Secretary-General's reform plan for the United Nations.

I would be remiss if I did not express the Kingdom of Bahrain's heartfelt condolences to the United States of America, Mexico and the Caribbean nations and their peoples on the natural disasters to which they have been subjected and which caused numerous fatalities and material damage. I reiterate our solidarity with them and pray that they will soon recover from their impact.

Under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of the Kingdom of Bahrain; His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, Prime Minister; and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister, the Kingdom of Bahrain remains faithful to its consistent policy of enhancing partnerships with the United Nations and its various bodies in expression of its firm belief in the role that our Organization is playing to achieve a more stable and prosperous world.

Accordingly, this year has witnessed numerous initiatives for fruitful cooperation, notably the launching of the King Hamad Youth Empowerment Award to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, aimed at consolidating the efforts of governmental and private entities to enhance the contribution of young people to the sustainable development process.

In March, the Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa Global Award for Women's Empowerment was officially launched. That award, named after the wife of His Majesty the King and President of the Supreme Council for Women, is in full conformity with the objectives of the United Nations in enhancing the role of women in development. It also reflects the pioneering experience of Bahraini women, both nationally and internationally.

Similarly, the International Youth Conference to Achieve Sustainable Development was held under the patronage of His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Representative of His Majesty the King for Charity Works and Youth Affairs, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme. It focused on raising awareness among young people of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and enhancing their role in achieving them.

In the context of Bahrain's keen interest in pursuing its efforts to achieve the SDGs and to maintain its leading position among countries with very high indicators in the field of human development, according to international sources, Bahrain looks forward to the forthcoming signing of a strategic partnership framework with the United Nations for the period 2017-2020.

My country has also made strides towards the elimination of forced labour and human trafficking by ratifying the relevant international agreements and protocols. It further issued an act prohibiting all forms

of human trafficking, with severe sentences imposed on the perpetrators, while also implementing the national referral system for the victims of trafficking — the first of its kind in the region — which provides a mechanism to monitor and redress that illegal practice.

Recently, the Kingdom of Bahrain issued the Unified Family Law, a key legislative tool for the consolidation of the family's stability and the preservation of all its rights without exploitation or mistreatment. That is based on the noble teachings of Islam and the principles enshrined in the Bahraini Constitution that the family is the foundation of society. That law equally exemplifies Bahrain's commitment to international instruments related to the family and women, including, most importantly, those of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

In support of the United Nations endeavours to address global warming and its implications in the area of climate change, the Kingdom of Bahrain deposited its instrument of ratification of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in December 2016, thereby renewing its commitment to that historic agreement, which we hope will consolidate international efforts to address that perilous phenomenon.

The Kingdom of Bahrain firmly believes that the maintenance of stability and security in the Middle East and the entire world requires a strong and common political will, as well as serious collective efforts to guarantee respect for the basic principles underlying relations among States, such as good-neighbourliness, non-interference in the internal affairs of others and compliance with international conventions and instruments, so that we can address the greatest challenge facing us, namely, terrorism, and deter individuals and entities from supporting and financing it. That is especially important now that terrorism is no longer limited to terrorist organizations that we are able to confront and eliminate. Rather, it has become a tool in the hands of States determined to generate crises in other countries in the pursuit of their own agenda. They have consequently become fully complicit partners in the commission of terrorist acts and a factor in the destabilization of international peace and security.

Given the strategic importance of peace and security for our vital region, my country is seeking to establish strategic partnerships within its own region and with its allies. As partners, we can work together to preserve the security of the Gulf region, combat

terrorism and provide protection for international navigation and commerce routes, in particular through close cooperation between the Bahrain Defense Force and the American Fifth Fleet, based in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The summit of the States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the United States of America was held in May this year in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and produced a memorandum of understanding to establish a centre responsible for combating the financing of terrorism. That and the Arab-Islamic-American summit are both important landmarks in combating terrorism in that they establish a strategic and effective partnership among the United States of America, the States of the GCC and the other Arab Islamic countries.

We reaffirm that the Global Center for Combating Extremist Ideology, which was inaugurated in Riyadh on the sidelines of the GCC-United States summit, will make a significant contribution to combating extremist ideologies and will promote the values of tolerance and coexistence throughout the world. In that context, I commend the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 71/291, which established the Office of Counter-Terrorism, an important step towards the consolidation of international efforts to address that scourge.

It is no longer acceptable that among us there are rogue countries that continue to occupy others' territories, thereby violating the sovereignty of States, threatening international peace and security, supporting extremism and terrorism, and spreading hate and anarchy. It is no longer tenable that we allow those countries to join our efforts to end struggles, resolve conflicts and halt complex humanitarian tragedies — situations that those countries were responsible for aggravating. We should refuse them the opportunity to be included among us and to misuse their voice to satisfy their ambitions and hostile goals. Confronting those countries is a duty and a responsibility that the entire international community must shoulder. They should either respect their commitments and keep pace with the collective international will to achieve peace, development and welfare, or be held clearly accountable and suffer isolation and the severe consequences of international resolutions and laws.

Against that backdrop, and to consolidate anti-terrorist and anti-extremist efforts, the Kingdom

of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the Arab Republic of Egypt, with the support of many other countries, availed themselves of their sovereign right under international law to sever relations with Qatar. That followed a long period of patience during which we exhausted all available means to halt Qatar's policies that violated all fraternal relations of good-neighbourliness and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

Qatar provided financial support and safe haven to terrorists and fugitives and disseminated a narrative replete with hate and extremism through its media and the individuals and institutions supporting it — all of whom we have placed on a unified terrorist list and most of whom are also included on international terrorist lists. That was done to make the situation clear to the entire world following the fallout of that terrorism, which spread to many countries, including my own. Qatar has supported systematic terrorist acts whose consequences we have suffered in the Kingdom of Bahrain and which have cost us the lives of many innocent civilians and security personnel. It has done so with a view to undermining national security and societal peace and overthrowing the Government system with the support of their affiliates.

It is therefore our collective responsibility to protect our States and peoples from those who seek to harm them, and to confront them firmly. If Qatar is serious — by its actions and not only its words — about engaging in dialogue and reclaiming its place among us, it must respond positively and commit to our reasonable demands in full transparency, based on the principles enshrined in the joint statement issued following meeting of the four countries in Cairo on 5 July 2017, in full conformity with international covenants and instruments. In that connection, we highly appreciate the tireless efforts and the good offices of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait.

We stress the fact that all actions taken against Qatar are directed neither against our peoples nor the Qatari people, for whom we have nothing but respect and affection and with whom we are linked by religion, family relations and a common history. We will always support their security and stability, and to that end, our countries have taken a number of measures to address the humanitarian issues, including those concerning family relations and health conditions. That was clearly shown by the facilities recently provided to Qataris

by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, including for Hajj and Umrah. That confirms the solid ties and refutes assertions of blockades or violations of human rights.

I take this opportunity to express my country's congratulations to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the great success of the Hajj season, which has been widely praised by all those participating in that major Islamic rite. It is a meaningful riposte to all those seeking to politicize the Hajj and turn it into an occasion for fomenting conflict and sedition. In attending to its highest priority, the Saudi Government thereby demonstrated its outstanding ability to protect the Two Holy Mosques and other sacred sites, as well as all the visitors performing the rites of Hajj or Umrah.

Regimes that constantly seek to spread anarchy and evil are instruments of destruction and will be the biggest losers as they drift away from the values of collective cooperation among nations. Such is the case of the Islamic Republic of Iran, where the people suffer from oppression, misery and poverty while gallows are erected in the streets. Living conditions are harsh and have taken that people — who are rich in history and civilization — backward dozens of years. Their resources are wasted to fuel violence and undermine the region's security for the sake of realizing Iran's hegemonic and expansionist ambitions through its Revolutionary Guard and its affiliates, such as the terrorist Hizbullah in Lebanon and Syria, the militias in Yemen and the terrorist cells and groups in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Iraq, as well as other countries that have suffered because of those hostile actions for such a protracted period.

We believe that the statement by the American President before the General Assembly (see A/72/PV.3) presents an accurate interpretation that clearly denounces the dangerous nature of the Iranian rogue regime, which undermines peace in the region. The world must confront that regime, stop it from pursuing its policies and financing of terrorism and oblige it to respect its neighbours' sovereignty. Since we always aspire to peace, we affirm that establishing normal ties with Iran is subject to the latter relinquishing its hegemonic, sectarian and ideological policies. Iran must respect the national values of peoples and refrain from exporting its revolution, which is based on a theocratic system of government. It must abide by the principles of good neighbourliness and non-interference in the internal affairs of countries.

We also call on Iran to end its occupation of the three Emirati islands — Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa — and to respond favourably to the peaceful initiative of the United Arab Emirates to recoup sovereignty over its territories, either through direct and serious negotiations, or by referral to the International Court of Justice.

On the other hand, the Republic of Iraq, which has suffered for so long and is still suffering from foreign interference, has recently achieved, with the means available to it, the liberation of the cities of Mosul and Tal Afar from the grip of Da'esh. That would not have been possible without the immense sacrifices by the Iraqi armed forces, the determination by the Government under Haider Al Abadi and the support provided by the Global Coalition against Da'esh, of which Bahrain is an active member. We reaffirm our constant support for all efforts aimed at restoring peace and security throughout Iraq and preserving its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

With regard to the situation in the Republic of Yemen, we reiterate our firm position of support for the legitimate Government under the leadership of President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour. We support that Government through our participation in the Arab coalition to support legitimacy in Yemen and through our support for the measures taken by the legitimate Government to extend its authority over all of Yemeni territory and to put an end to militias that attempt coups d'état with the support of foreign powers. We support the Government's steps to reach a comprehensive political solution on the basis of international mandates, notably the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcomes of the national dialogue and Security Council resolution 2216 (2015). That will terminate all forms of foreign intervention and put an end to the critical humanitarian situation of the Yemeni people.

We reaffirm that we do not side with any one Yemeni party against the other, but rather we oppose foreign intervention that seeks to harm this beloved country. We appreciate the efforts of Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen.

We in the Syrian Arab Republic urge the international community to exert greater efforts to protect civilians and save their lives, to compel all parties to abide by the ceasefire decision and the

establishment of the de-escalation zones, to guarantee access to besieged areas for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and to intensify support to countries hosting large numbers of our Syrian brethren, most notably the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. That is in addition to pushing forward all efforts aimed at achieving a political solution that would preserve Syria's unity and territorial integrity while ending foreign intervention in its internal affairs. The solution should also see the abolition of all terrorist organizations and provide peace and security to all Syrians so they can actively participate in the determination of their own future, on the basis of the first Geneva communiqué (A/66/865, annex) and Security Council resolutions 2254 (2015) and 2268 (2016).

We reaffirm our support for the Astana talks and the action of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, in the hope that they will contribute to the resolution of this protracted crisis.

In Libya, we applaud the liberation of a number of major cities from the hands of terrorist groups. We reaffirm our full support for the efforts of all actors to achieve consensus among all Libyan parties and for the implementation of the political agreement signed in Skhirat. Those efforts include those by Libya's neighbouring countries and the meetings held in the United Arab Emirates and the French Republic between Mr. Faiez Serraj, President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya, and Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, Commander-in-Chief of the Libyan army. We hope that such efforts will continue with a view to preserving Libya's unity and territorial integrity, consistent with the aspirations of the people for development and progress. We also welcome the appointment of Mr. Ghassan Salamé as Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Libya and wish him every success.

With regard to the question of the Moroccan Sahara, the Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms the need to support the negotiations aimed at achieving a consensual and final political solution to that problem, in the context of national sovereignty of the Kingdom of Morocco and on the basis of relevant Security Council resolutions that confirm the seriousness of Morocco's self-government initiative. We urge all parties to fully cooperate with the United Nations in that regard.

We reiterate our total objection to the plight of Muslims in Myanmar as a result of excessive use of force. We call on the Myanmar Government to assume its responsibilities in protecting the Rohingya Muslims and to facilitate their access to all forms of relief and assistance so as to put an end to this human tragedy.

The Palestinian question is at the top of the foreign-policy priorities of the Kingdom of Bahrain, which has always stood with the Palestinian people in their legitimate aspirations to enjoy all their legitimate rights, including an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital and within the borders of 4 June 1967, in conformity with the relevant international resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the two-State solution.

We welcome the positive steps taken lately by Palestinian factions to end their divisions in favour of the vital Palestinian interests through political work and non-violence. We commend the pivotal role played by His Excellency President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt in that respect. It confirms the central role of Egypt in the support of causes related to the Arab nation, of which it constitutes the strategic centre. It is the main pillar of peace and security in the region.

The Palestinian question is not a religious issue. Palestine is the cradle of religions where everyone lived in perfect harmony. Rather, it is a political issue par excellence, an issue of territorial occupation that must end. Its people must return to their homeland. Rights denied must be restored to their owners. That precisely is what Israel, notwithstanding all its security concerns, should understand, for it will achieve peace for its people and for itself only when it abandons all forms of violence against Palestinians. It should halt its settlement activities and stop violating the sanctity of religious sites, especially the repeated aggressions and provocative acts in the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque, which enrage Muslims all over the world and impede the resumption of the peace process and all regional and international initiatives in its support.

At this juncture, we wish to express our sincere appreciation for the commendable work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the substantial assistance it provides the Palestinians inside the territory and in the neighbouring countries.

The Kingdom of Bahrain stresses the need to achieve universal adherence to the Comprehensive

Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, taking into account the right of all peoples to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes. Also, Israel should implement the resolution issued by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons pertaining to a nuclear-weapon-free Middle East. Equally, we stress the need for Iran to implement Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), on the Iranian nuclear agreement, including those parts concerning ballistic and other weapons. Iran will face severe sanctions if it violates the commitments outlined in that resolution or in the international safeguard system of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Further, we welcome Security Council resolution 2375 (2017), which pertains to new sanctions on North Korea, in view of its continued nuclear and ballistic missiles tests, which threaten its neighbours and international peace and security.

Since its inception as an Arab and Islamic entity in 1783, the Kingdom of Bahrain has firmly believed in the importance of collective action in the pursuit of security, development and prosperity. It orients all of its means toward the service of its people, its region and the world as a whole. Since time immemorial, Allah has blessed it with wise leadership that has inherited an acute sense of responsibility for the achievement of the ultimate objectives of ideal relations with its neighbours. It will steadfastly follow that path and will never go astray. It will remain an effective member of the international community and a trusted partner in its Arab and Islamic setting and will hold onto that approach as the solid foundation of its foreign relations. We will remain open to all cultures and peoples, in the spirit of tolerance and moderation, and will pursue the path to progress and development with determination and perseverance in order to safeguard our achievements, development and prosperity.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Saleumxay Kommasith, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Mr. Kommasith (Lao People's Democratic Republic): At the outset, on behalf of the delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, I would like to extend my congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I am confident that with his extensive diplomatic experience, he will guide the session with great success. We stand ready to extend our full support and

cooperation to him in the discharge of his noble duty. Likewise, let me extend my profound congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson for the successful completion of his tenure as the President of the Assembly at its seventy-first session.

Once again, let me take this opportunity to extend my congratulations to His Excellency Mr. António Guterres on his appointment as the Secretary-General and for his initiative on the management reform of the United Nations, so that the Organization can respond effectively to the current global challenges. I hope that such efforts will contribute to the attainment of the aims and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations.

May I join other representatives in extending our deep sympathy to the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean that have been severely affected by recent natural disasters.

Mr. Brown (Liberia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Today, the current global geopolitical landscape is fraught with myriad challenges that pose major threats to peace and security and hamper the development of countries and regions of the world. Therefore our concerted efforts are required to overcome those obstacles and challenges so that people in different countries and regions of the world can live their lives in durable peace and prosperity. That is why the theme chosen for the seventy-second session — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet" — is apt, as the international community is focusing on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which has promised to leave no one behind.

It is my firm belief that peace and security remain the common aspiration of the international community. Therefore, in order to maintain and promote peace and development, it is incumbent upon us to enhance collaboration so that peace and sustainable development can prevail in our world. The United Nations, which is the only universal Organization with mandates to maintain and promote peace and cooperation for development, has to be at the forefront. To realize those objectives, the United Nations needs to be reformed in such a way that it can respond to the current needs and pressing challenges of today.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic earnestly hopes to see a world without nuclear and other weapons

of mass destruction. In that context, we welcome the recent adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which we also signed two days ago. However, we are well aware that we still have an uphill task ahead of us for the Treaty to enter into force and be effectively implemented. Therefore, the international community has to redouble its efforts in that respect.

Throughout the past decades, we have seen that many countries in the world have experienced sustained economic growth and rapid development, which have lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. That is thanks to peace and security, which have been essential prerequisites for the social and economic advancement of nations. At the same time, the improvement of people's well-being will have a positive impact on political stability and social order and will help to reduce conflicts. Past experience shows that settling disputes by peaceful means and through diplomatic solutions is the best way to do so, as it is more durable and causes no loss of lives or property. Thus, it is important for the international community to further build mutual trust and flexibility and to jointly address the root causes of problems.

In that spirit, the Lao People's Democratic Republic calls on all parties involved in disputes or conflicts in various regions of the world to exercise the utmost restraint and resolve such conflicts through diplomatic and peaceful means so as to de-escalate tensions, as we firmly believe that only a peaceful environment can form a foundation for advancing national social and economic development.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic welcomes the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States of America and the Republic of Cuba and earnestly hopes that such relations will be enhanced, leading to the lifting of the embargo in the near future. That would bring about real benefits to the peoples of the two countries, as well as to the region and the world at large. Likewise, the Lao People's Democratic Republic also hopes that the Palestinian issue, which has lasted for many decades, will be resolved through peaceful means, with a view to creating two independent States of Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace, security and within internationally recognized borders, as stipulated in the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

This year, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) turns 50. Over the past five decades,

ASEAN has gone through a number of challenges and has adjusted itself to the changing regional and international environment, while taking into account its diversity and the particularities in the region. It has achieved progress gradually, which led to the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community at the end of 2015.

The most remarkable achievement of ASEAN is its maintenance of peace, security and stability in the region, thus creating favourable conditions for ASEAN member States for the pursuit of their socioeconomic development and regional economic integration. At the same time, ASEAN has strengthened its relations with external parties, especially its dialogue partners in a substantive and comprehensive manner, based on mutual benefit. Importantly, ASEAN centrality has been recognized by all external partners under ASEAN-initiated mechanisms. Countries in the region and beyond are keen to forge cooperation with ASEAN, as it provides a venue for them to participate in discussions on many important regional and international issues of common interest and concern, thereby promoting mutual understanding and trust among participants, as well as peace, stability and development in the region and the world.

ASEAN's achievements have been possible thanks to the ASEAN Way, which is an important factor, especially the principles of consultation and consensus and moving at a pace comfortable to all. The ASEAN Way signifies ASEAN centrality and unity. The ASEAN Way remains relevant, and ASEAN will continue to uphold its principles in the years to come.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic attaches great importance to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Since its adoption, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been streamlined into our national socioeconomic development plan for 2016-2020, and a national steering committee for the implementation of the SDGs, which is chaired by our Prime Minister, has been formally established. At the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development held in July, the Lao People's Democratic Republic registered to submit and present our Voluntary National Review in 2018. All this has demonstrated our Government's firm political will and unwavering commitment to implementing and achieving the SDGs, as well as to building a strong foundation to support our country's aspirations to

graduate from the status of least developing country by 2020.

In pursuit of fostering an enabling environment conducive to achieving sustainable development, the Lao Government has undertaken an important initiative in adopting our national SDG 18, entitled "Lives Safe from UXO", which was officially launched by our Prime Minister and former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in September 2016 on the sidelines of the eighth ASEAN-United Nations summit in Vientiane. SDG 18 aims to address specific development challenges caused by unexploded ordnance and mitigate its impacts on the lives of our people, which will pave the way for improving the livelihood and well-being of the rural population and enabling them to contribute to the implementation of the Agenda for Sustainable Development.

As both a least developed country (LDC) and a landlocked country, the Lao People's Democratic Republic encounters various challenges that hinder our socioeconomic development and the achievement of our agreed global development goals. Against that backdrop, the country has pursued its development through the implementation of our eighth five-year national socioeconomic development plan. The Strategy 2025 and the Vision 2030 are aimed at graduating from LDC status and becoming a high-middle-income country by 2030.

Towards that end, the Lao People's Democratic Republic pursues a policy of transforming itself from a landlocked country into a land-linked hub, facilitating direct connectivity between immediate neighbouring countries such as Viet Nam, Thailand and China, and the wider region. We hope to constitute a part of the production and supply chains through the implementation of infrastructure projects; the improvement of logistics and transport networks, such as the construction of a high-speed railway from Vientiane to Kunming, in southern China; and the improvement of the north-south economic corridor and the east-west economic corridor, among others. Those national strategies are being implemented as part of international and regional initiatives under way, including the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, the ASEAN Master Plan 2025 and China's One Belt and Road Initiative, of which the Lao People's Democratic Republic is a partner.

I am of the view that political will is a fundamental principle for attaining all agreed development goals.

Without firm political commitment, we will not be able to turn the Agenda for Sustainable Development into concrete actions and outcomes. Therefore, my delegation firmly believes that development remains an integral part of and a top priority for ensuring international peace, security and human rights, all of which are closely linked.

Against that backdrop, we call on the international community to increase concerted efforts to ensure that development brings equal benefits for all countries. The Lao Government once again reaffirms its strong commitment and determination to work more closely with the international community in order to realize the 2030 Agenda and achieve our national development objectives of eradicating poverty, laying a solid foundation for graduation from LDC status, turning the country into an industrialized and modern nation and moving towards the direction of green and sustainable development that benefits all the people, thereby ensuring that no one in the country is left behind.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Simon Coveney, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade with responsibility for Brexit of Ireland.

Mr. Coveney (Ireland): Allow me to begin by offering Ireland's sympathy to all those in Mexico affected by the devastating earthquake earlier this week and to commend those who have been engaged in the heroic rescue operations of the last few days. I also want to extend condolences to the representatives of people in the Caribbean islands, who are facing extraordinary difficulties following the recent, relentless hurricanes.

Now is no time for business as usual at the United Nations. The international community is facing unprecedented challenges and must respond. I am here because I think that this Organization matters. It is an Organization that now faces daily challenges to its political authority and management missions.

My country, Ireland, has kept faith with the United Nations since we joined as a young republic that had fought hard for its own independence and saw being a Member of the United Nation as fundamental to its future and the future security of its people. Over 60 years later, we still do. Our faith has not been misplaced, and it is as strong today as ever. However, we certainly have something to say about the future of the Organization and the role we believe it must play in reducing suffering across the globe and securing a shared peace and security and prosperity for everybody.

Given our history as a small country, with its own troubled past, we see very clearly the advantages of a rules-based order in international affairs. It is because Ireland is small, outward-looking and heavily dependent on external trade for our own well-being that we pursue an active foreign policy.

As Ireland's experience in the European Union has shown us, we are far stronger acting collectively than we are acting alone. Partnership and cooperation has brought peace and prosperity to the European continent. In fact, for Ireland, our membership of the European Union, working closely with other member States, has strengthened our independence and self-confidence and security rather than diminished it. It is therefore through collective actions that we reinforce our own security and well-being, which is what the United Nations needs to be all about.

The case for international cooperation and multilateralism is compelling. By working together, we lay foundations of trust, align our perspectives more closely and accept our differences more willingly. Perhaps most importantly, we build habits of cooperation that better allow us to address the common threats and opportunities that we should be facing together. The alternatives — unilateralism, transactional diplomacy, protectionism and confrontation — are not, in fact, viable at all. Their short-term populist appeal obscures their long-term cost. Surely we have learned that from history.

We are living in an era when local and global challenges are intersecting with increasing force. Today's problems do not carry passports or recognize international borders. There are no unilateral solutions to the vast majority of the global challenges that we face together. Local and regional issues, from climate change, migration, armed conflict and hunger to the destruction of the marine environment in certain parts of the world, often become global issues, including in corners of the world that are far from the origins of the problems.

The enormous scale of the challenges that face the world might lead some to question whether multilateralism and the United Nations are up to the task. My response is that we can be, and we must be. When properly mobilized, when we pull together and move from debating halls like this Hall to actually getting things done on the ground, we can move mountains together. The United Nations delivers

extraordinary results, such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The United Nations has led the global effort to eradicate smallpox, end apartheid, promote arms control, save the lives of millions of children through UNICEF and protect our cultural heritage through UNESCO.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a stand-out recent achievement. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have the power and potential to transform our world, addressing the root causes of poverty, inequality and instability. However, their potential can be realized only through a strong and confident multilateral system that empowers Member States to reach the ambitious but necessary targets we have set ourselves. Having played an important role in facilitating agreement on the SDGs in 2015, Ireland is committed to their implementation, domestically and through our foreign policy.

Failure should not be an option here. The United Nations is the fulcrum upon which we can leverage the change required. However, the walls dividing the three pillars of the United Nations — development, human rights, and peace and security — have in the past impeded our efforts to accelerate sustainable development. In my view, the SDGs represent a fundamental breakthrough, recognizing the many aspects of sustainable development that straddle those pillars. As we move forward on implementation, we must break down the Organization's institutional silos, which sometimes hinder progress.

Since we gathered here a year ago, we appointed António Guterres as Secretary-General. Ireland believes that he has the skills, experience and, perhaps most importantly, the compassion to do a very tough but hugely important job. The difficult international environment demands, more than ever, brave and principled leadership. We welcome the clear direction the Secretary-General is providing and the steps he is taking to reform the Organization.

While we, the Member States, have expressed confidence that the Secretary-General has the abilities to lead the United Nations forward at a time when the world is crying out for better multilateral engagement, we must allow him to lead. It is very tempting for Member States, particularly large ones, to micromanage the work of the Secretariat, but such an approach is likely to impede and not enhance reform.

However, it is not enough that only the internal mechanisms of the United Nations meet twenty-first century standards. United Nations political bodies must also reflect today's world and realities. Nowhere is that more evident than with regard to the composition of the Security Council. The Security Council does not reflect the world that has evolved since the United Nations was established in 1945. Quite plainly, we would be hard pressed to find any entity, public or private, anywhere in the world that remains so untouched by the changes and realities of the world around it.

Vast areas of our world are either insufficiently represented or not represented at all on the Security Council. In our view, the need to increase the size of the Council is clear. Ireland sees the obvious need for a much stronger African representation on the Council, so that there can be a greater African say in the Council decisions that affect their continent. We would also favour consideration of a designated seat for small island developing States. Those changes are politically controversial, but we cannot ignore them forever.

The makeup of the Security Council is not the only problem. Let us be clear and honest. While the use or threat of the veto remains in place, as it does today, the work of the Council is often impeded and the United Nations can be paralysed in its capacity to respond to the gravest crises facing the international community. The failure of the Security Council to take action in preventing mass atrocity crimes — most recently with regard to Syria, but also on other occasions — betrays victims and weakens the credibility of the Organization. The case for reform is therefore not an academic or institutional question; it is a deeper question of fundamental legitimacy and effectiveness and credibility for the United Nations in the future.

Although geographically a small island on the periphery of Europe, Ireland's people and its outlook are global, influenced by connecting with people and events around the world, as we do. In many ways Ireland, like some of the other nations represented here, is like a global tribe that extends far beyond our own island.

No part of our contribution to the United Nations resonates more with Irish people than our United Nations peacekeepers — the thousands of men and women who have served under Blue Helmets, representing Ireland, our people and values. They are true ambassadors. Since 1958, when Irish troops first

began serving the United Nations, not a single day has passed without Irish participation in United Nations peace-support operations. We believe that we are making a difference. Ireland's peacekeepers have been natural soldier-diplomats in trouble spots across the globe, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, doing United Nations work day by day and deed by deed.

Today, we have almost 550 troops in the field. Ireland is the highest per capita European Union contributor of troops to United Nations peacekeeping, with deployments to six United Nations missions across the Middle East and Africa. We are making a substantial contribution to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon in particular, where, as always, our peacekeepers act with impartiality and integrity and provide the necessary leadership required in a very difficult and challenging environment.

I am pleased to note that Ireland is committed to doubling the number of women in our defence forces—I was the Minister for Defence when that decision was made—with the aim also of significantly increasing female participation in peacekeeping, a demand of the Secretary-General. As the Secretary-General said at the Security Council this week (see S/PV.8051), and as we know from the women and peace and security agenda, increased female participation leads to better decision-making, improved situational awareness, a better focus on protection of civilians and enhanced reporting of and accountability for sexual exploitation and abuse.

We all know that conflict prevention has the potential to save lives and to protect hard-won development gains, and that it comes at a far lower financial cost than peacekeeping operations, post-conflict peacebuilding or, in some cases, State-building. We strongly support the Secretary-General's efforts to reorient the international community's thinking toward crisis and conflict prevention. Ireland seeks to share our own national experience and past in our work on conflict prevention, mediation and State-building. We have made some mistakes, but we have also had successes, and we would like others to share the lessons from that experience.

As the first State to sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in 1968, we have a deep commitment to its full implementation. Earlier this week I was very pleased to sign the recently approved Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear

Weapons, which was supported by 122 members of this Assembly, and growing. Ireland is proud to have played a leadership role, together with Austria, Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria and South Africa, in bringing forward the Assembly resolution convening the diplomatic conference that negotiated this ground-breaking treaty.

The case for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons has never been stronger, as the volatile situation on the Korean peninsula makes very clear this week. I unreservedly condemn the recent series of missile and nuclear weapons testing by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. These developments highlight the urgent need for the swift and immediate entry into force of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty. I understand that I will be followed today on this rostrum by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic, and I would urge him to de-escalate the provocative language and tensions of this week. This is a conflict that the world does not need and must move away from.

The scale and severity of humanitarian crises is one of the greatest challenges facing the international community. Ireland is committed to providing humanitarian assistance and contributing to international efforts to ease the plight of civilians caught in conflicts in South Sudan, Syria, Yemen and Iraq, to name but a few. As those large-scale crises dominate the headlines, Ireland is conscious of the many forgotten or underfunded crises and the need to maintain a focus on ensuring that human suffering, wherever it occurs in the world, is not ignored.

The vast majority of displaced people are being sheltered in communities that are already experiencing high levels of vulnerability and poverty, placing a huge strain on already limited resources. Therefore Ireland is supporting both refugees and vulnerable host communities on the basis of need. I particularly want to acknowledge the generosity of so many States—such as Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and many more—that are hosting very large numbers of people displaced by conflicts in neighbouring countries.

Ireland is proud of its strong and targeted contribution to eradicating global hunger, reducing extreme poverty, addressing conflict and instability and responding to humanitarian crises wherever they occur. It is horrifying to think that in 2017 we have four famines affecting more than 20 million people,

70 per cent of whom are children, and that we as an international community have allowed that to happen, knowing that it was on the way. For Ireland, strong partnerships, especially with least developed countries, will remain at the core of our approach as we work together for a peaceful and prosperous future. We applaud the Secretary-General's efforts to enhance coherence, effectiveness and accountability, as well as the delivery of results where it matters most — which is on the ground.

The Charter of the United Nations does not begin "We the Member States" but rather "We the peoples". Our policies and actions must reflect the inherent equality of humankind at the core of our multilateral system. In practice, that means listening to and heeding the voices of women, the voices of young people and the voices of the marginalized. The women and peace and security agenda has had a hugely positive global impact with the realization that we can create more durable and sustainable peace by working to ensure that women play their rightful role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts. Ireland will play our part, including as Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women for the next two years.

A similar strategic approach must also be taken in engaging young people in all our countries. Young people must have a role in shaping a future that they will ultimately inherit; otherwise, we are, on a generational basis, robbing a future from them. We have a phrase in Irish that the interpreters will not be able to translate: "*Aid an óige agus tuisfadh sí*". Broadly translated, this means "Praise the youth and they will come". I cannot think of any continent where that is more relevant today than Africa. Young people are key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and we must find ways to encourage their active participation, again and again and again, ensuring that they are part of shaping the solutions for their future.

There are positive signs: the vitality of entrepreneurship, the creative use of technology, infrastructure development, the potential of renewable energy, increasing access to good education, improvements in agricultural yields, adding value to commodities, and better prospects for women and girls in politics and economic life. African countries are particularly affected by global challenges that lie outside their control in many ways, such as climate change, conflict and food insecurity. Those issues can be addressed only in their African contexts, in a

spirit of effective global partnership. Such partnership requires understanding local perspectives anchored in local experience, particularly regarding how to tackle root causes.

I want Ireland to play a leading role in Europe in helping to build better and more effective partnerships with the continent of Africa as a whole, rooted in shared interests and values and sustained over the medium to long term on the basis of parity of esteem and equality. We need a new political architecture, in my view, for the relationship between the European Union and Africa, one that matches the urgency and scale of the shared challenges we know we are going to face over the next twenty years. We are in the same global neighbourhood, and we need to put structures in place to treat each other as true neighbours.

The Middle East is also part of Europe's close neighbourhood, and its challenges resonate deeply with the people of Ireland. The conflicts in Syria and Yemen have caused untold suffering. Ireland has responded as generously as we can with almost €100 million in humanitarian aid, but what the people of Syria and Yemen need most right now is peace to enable them to rebuild their lives and start the process of rebuilding their countries. I urge all sides in the two conflicts to work for an end to violence and to engage in the search for peaceful political solutions under United Nations auspices and for accountability for crimes committed.

Ireland is committed to constructive and principled diplomatic action on the Middle East peace process. Next year will be the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Oslo Accords. We cannot let ourselves become complacent about the status quo because the status quo is not acceptable, and we know where it is going. We cannot let our efforts to achieve peace stagnate either. Palestinians need an end to occupation, and Israelis need security. Continued construction of settlements undermines both objectives, and we need to act on that. I wish the United States success in its efforts to build some momentum for peace and a new peace initiative for the first time in quite some time.

Ireland will give all the support it can to achieving a two-State solution, which we remain convinced is the only way to secure prosperity and security for both peoples. The time to act on this is now. We cannot become cynical or jaded. We owe it to all Palestinians and Israelis to continue to bring energy, resolve and ideas to the table and help them finally deliver a lasting

peace, which would not only be good for both of those peoples, but also a welcome, if not a desperately needed, positive news story for the broader Middle East as well.

In relation to Myanmar, Ireland strongly condemns the violence in Rakhine state that has driven hundreds of thousands from their homes into neighbouring Bangladesh. Here at the General Assembly we have to insist on an end to violence, to the upholding of the rule of law and the recognition of the right of return of all those who have been forced to leave their country. I know the situation is difficult — my friend from Singapore has highlighted its complexities — but we have to ensure that standards are met.

Ireland sees itself as a natural child of the United Nations. We are small. We are an island that has experienced colonization and conflict, as many of us here have also done. But here at the United Nations, we listen to others, especially if we hold a different view on an issue or a policy. We are convinced that in today's globalized world we must live in each other's shelter and not in each other's shadow.

Ireland's contribution to the United Nations in the fields of sustainable development, humanitarian assistance, disarmament, human rights and the rule of law has been steadfast. United Nations membership has been and will continue to be at the very heart of Irish foreign policy. Ireland is proud to be a candidate for a seat on the Security Council in the elections to be held in 2020. We have presented our candidature because we believe deeply that we should step forward and play our part in support of multilateralism at a time of significant global instability and realignment of geopolitical influences.

We have something to say, and we will listen to others when they speak. We will be courageous on behalf of the United Nations when needed. With Ireland, the world knows what it gets — a small country with big thinking, a country that listens and a strong independent voice that promotes the values that should inspire the Organization in future.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ri Yong Ho, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ri Yong Ho (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) (*spoke in Korean; English text provided by the delegation*): First of all, allow me to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as the

President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I look forward to the successful outcome of this session, which will unfold under his able guidance.

Before going into the main points in my remarks, I feel obligated to make comments on the speech made some four days ago by someone called the United States President, which tainted this sacred United Nations forum (see A/72/PV.3). Since Trump uttered such reckless and violent words from this very rostrum, attacking the supreme dignity of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, I think it is fair for me to respond in a corresponding tone.

During his eight months in power, he has turned the White House into a noisy marketplace filled with the crackling sounds of abacus beads. Now he has tried to turn the United Nations forum into a gangster's nest where only money is respected and bloodshed is the order of the day. The absurd reality of a person like Trump — a mentally deranged and complacent megalomaniac, a person who is even chastised by some Americans as "Commander-in-Grief", "Lyin' King" and "President Evil" — holding the office of President of the United States, and, indeed, the dangerous reality of an aging gambler using threats, fraud and every other type of schemes to acquire a patch of land having his finger on the nuclear button, are what constitute the gravest threat to international peace and security today.

Due to his lack of basic common knowledge and appropriate feelings, he has tried to insult the supreme dignity of my country by referring to its leader as "rocket man". By doing so, however, he has committed the irreversible error of making our rockets rain down on the entire United States mainland all the more inevitable. No one other than Trump himself is on a suicide mission. Should innocent lives in the United States be harmed by his suicidal inclinations, Trump will be held totally responsible.

Our respected Supreme Leader Comrade Kim Jong Un responded to Trump's statement:

"As a man who represents the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and on behalf of the dignity and honour of my State and my people, and on my own behalf, I will make the man holding the prerogative of the supreme command in the United States pay dearly for his speech calling for the total destruction of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea."

Trump may not have been aware of what he uttered, but we will make sure that he bears consequences far beyond his words and far beyond the scope of what he can handle — even if he claims to be able to handle anything.

The theme of the seventy-second session is “Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet”. For all countries and peoples to enjoy peace and a decent life, it is imperative that genuine international justice be realized before anything else. Realizing international justice is one of the principal missions of the United Nations.

As Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations stipulates, one of the purposes of the United Nations is

“to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace”.

However, due to the high-handedness and arbitrariness of one particular large Power, the purposes and principles of the Charter and other established basic principles of international relations are at present being wantonly ignored in the United Nations arena. Conspiracies to commit abnormal acts that justify or legitimize high-handedness and arbitrariness or acts that violate truth and justice are tolerated or supported.

The most flagrant violation of international justice can be seen in the handling of the situation on the Korean peninsula. Unprecedented acts of injustice, including harsh sanctions imposed on a victim that has chosen to stand up to an offender, are openly committed in the name of the United Nations. The essence of the situation on the Korean peninsula is a confrontation between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, where the former is trying to defend its national dignity and sovereignty against the latter's hostile policies and nuclear threats.

The United States is the country that first produced nuclear weapons and the only country to have actually used them, massacring hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians. The United States threatened to use nuclear weapons against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea during the Korean War in the 1950s and first introduced nuclear weapons to the Korean peninsula after that war. The United States started large-scale joint military exercises against the

Democratic People's Republic of Korea during the Cold War period and further intensified their scope and aggressive nature after the Cold War by staging them more frequently — several times a year — and by mobilizing more strategic nuclear assets.

What could be a bigger threat than the use of the words “fire and fury” and “total destruction”, in the statement made by the President of the world's biggest nuclear Power? The United States is the very reason that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has to possess nuclear weapons. We have had to develop and strengthen our nuclear arsenal to current levels so that we could cope with the threats of that country. The hostile policies and nuclear threats of the United States have continued for over 70 years, which has led to a touch-and-go situation on the Korean peninsula. Further, due to the high-handedness of the United States, the United Nations has adopted unjustifiable resolutions that are the embodiment of injustice.

Our respected Supreme Leader Comrade Kim Jong Un, Chairman of the Workers' Party of Korea, Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army, has said that international justice is never achieved in a vacuum. Rather, it can be achieved only when independent, anti-imperialist countries are strong enough to demand it.

Absent true international justice, the only philosophical principle that remains valid is that force must be addressed with force. Nuclear weapons of tyranny must therefore be met with the nuclear hammer of justice. Pursuant to this principle, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's use of nuclear deterrence is a righteous act of self-defence, and a last resort.

As part of its efforts to achieve the goal of becoming a nuclear-weapon State, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea recently conducted the successful test of a hydrogen bomb that can be mounted on an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). With this step, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is in the process of consolidating its status as a nuclear Power, consistent with its double aim of developing its economy and its nuclear arsenal. For all intents and purposes, our nuclear weapons are a deterrent designed to put an end to the nuclear threat of the United States and to prevent a military invasion by that country. Our ultimate goal is to establish a balance of power with the United States.

Everyone present in this Hall today is aware that, at every stage in the development and growth of its nuclear arsenal, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, unlike other nuclear-weapon States, has never failed to disclose its testing or the results of its testing. Since we have sufficiently strengthened our deterrent with a view to safeguarding the peace and security of the Korean peninsula and the region, the United States and its followers must now think twice before launching a military provocation against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Although the United States speaks of fire and fury and total destruction, *inter alia*, every time it makes such provocations it is compelled to use qualifiers such as "hopefully that will not be necessary" or "that is not our first option" and so on. Accordingly, we are convinced that our actions have helped to consolidate the peace and security of North-East Asia and the region as a whole as much as possible.

We do not need anyone else to recognize our status as a nuclear-weapon State or our nuclear-strike capability. As it flew through the endless blue sky in the recent ballistic test, our ICBM etched the sacred name of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea across the universe. The rocket's warhead left its trace on the blue waves of the Pacific Ocean, and the tremendous explosion and vibrations caused by the hydrogen bomb were recorded all over the planet. Although our decision to opt for possession of nuclear weapons was forced upon us by the United States, it has resulted in our country achieving the status of a nuclear-weapon State and a rocket-possessing Power. The attendant prestige has become a part of the immortal destiny of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The failure of the United Nations to fulfil its role of realizing genuine international justice is a primary result of the undemocratic and antiquated practices of the Security Council. For it is none other than the Security Council that disregards the Charter of the United Nations and acts only to satisfy the will and interests of its permanent members. It is not a trivial detail that the issue of Security Council reform was raised as early as 1992, at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, in resolution 47/62. Since then, the issue of Security Council reform has been discussed at the General Assembly every year for the past 25 years, without any progress whatsoever. It is therefore clear how deeply the current permanent members are fixated on their anachronistic vested

interests. One permanent member alone can veto the general will of over 190 States Members of the United Nations, which is a testament to how undemocratic the Security Council is.

In this Hall today, I would like once again to reiterate the unjust and unfair nature of the resolutions adopted by the Security Council against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. First of all, relying on a double standard, the Security Council has adopted illegal resolutions that prohibit the launch of satellites by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Such prohibition violates international law, which provides for the peaceful use of outer space as a sovereign right of every State. The Security Council takes no issue with any other satellite-launching countries.

Secondly, also in reliance on a double standard, the Security Council has adopted illegal resolutions that arbitrarily prohibit nuclear tests by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, despite the fact that nuclear testing is the strict sovereign right of every State, since the international law on the prohibition of nuclear testing has not yet entered into force. In addition, other countries have conducted far more nuclear tests than we have.

Thirdly, the Security Council has condemned the development of nuclear weapons by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a threat to international peace and security and, on that basis, once again relying on a double standard, has fabricated illegal resolutions that contravene Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, which recognizes every State's right to self-defence. The Security Council has taken such action without calling into question other countries that continue to develop nuclear weapons of various kinds.

The reason that those unjust and unfair resolutions continue to be adopted is that the permanent members of the Security Council — all nuclear Powers — have a shared interest in maintaining their monopoly on nuclear status. The permanent members of the Security Council often talk of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. However, in the context of nuclear non-proliferation, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's possession of nuclear weapons is a justified measure of self-defence. Indeed, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was made possible because nuclear-weapon States had promised not to threaten non-nuclear-weapon States with their nuclear arsenals. Article X of the NPT stipulates that

each party shall have the right to withdraw from the Treaty if it decides that its supreme interests have been jeopardized. This Article recognizes that the supreme interests of States supersede nuclear non-proliferation. In the end, the United States has itself impeded international efforts aimed at nuclear non-proliferation by refusing to give up making nuclear threats against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Rather, its behaviour has compelled the latter to strive to possess nuclear weapons.

The foregoing eloquently demonstrates that the resolutions adopted to constrain the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are not based on any established principle, but are simply the product of the undemocratic and antiquated practices of the Security Council and the conspiracy and collusion of forces that are obsessed with their own interests alone. The United States makes the claim, even here at the United Nations, that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's possession of hydrogen bomb and intercontinental ballistic missiles constitutes a global threat. However, such a claim is a big lie tantamount to the notorious big lie conjured up by the United States in 2003 about the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq in order to justify invading that country.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a responsible nuclear-weapon State. We will take preventive measures in the form of merciless pre-emptive action in the event that the United States or its vassal forces show any sign of undertaking any sort of decapitating operation on our headquarters or other military attack against our country. However, we have no intention whatsoever to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against the countries that do not join in a United States military action against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The United States is resorting to intrigue when it condemns the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's possession of nuclear weapons as a global threat. It is simply using that fact as a pretext for coercing other States Members of the United Nations into implementing the sanctions resolutions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It is a sneaky and selfish attempt by the United States to shirk its responsibility on the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula and pursue its own interests by using and sacrificing other countries that have nothing to do with the issue.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea requested the United Nations Secretariat to organize a forum of international law experts to assess the legal grounds and lawfulness of the Security Council resolutions, but we have had no response for nine months. Previously, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had made repeated requests to the Security Council to discuss the serious threat to international peace and security posed by the large-scale, aggressive and provocative joint military exercises undertaken by the United States and South Korea, but each of these requests was turned down and the issue has never been put on the Security Council's agenda.

The Charter of the United Nations stipulates that Members of the United Nations accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council. If the resolutions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea adopted at the Security Council were truly lawful and fair, there would be no need at all for United States ambassadors abroad, and even the United States President and the Secretary of State, to coerce other countries into implementing the resolutions. Furthermore, the United States would not have to bring its stooges, for example, South Korea and Japan, into the matter.

The States Members of the United Nations should not give in to pressure exerted by an individual major Power on implementing Security Council resolutions. Rather, they should make an independent judgment on the legality, impartiality and morality of such resolutions and contribute to promoting Security Council reform by further raising their voices against high-handedness and arbitrariness.

The United States imposed sanctions on our country from the very first day that it was founded, and the history of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which spans more than 70 years, is in a sense a history of struggle where its people have had to persevere on the road of self-development despite being under the world's harshest sanctions. Through such a prolonged arduous struggle, we are at last only a few steps away from the final stage of completing the State's nuclear force. The possibility that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea might be shaken an inch or change its stance as a result of harsher sanctions imposed by hostile forces is a vain hope.

In the near future, the day will certainly come when we will settle the account for all damages caused

to our peaceful economic development and to the improvement of our people's lives. All of the sufferings of our innocent women, children and elderly caused by the heinous and barbaric sanctions against our Republic will one day be redressed. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has established a Sanctions Damage Investigation Committee to make a comprehensive study of the total damages inflicted on our Republic by all forms of sanctions. The Committee will thoroughly investigate and compile all physical and moral damage imposed on my country by the United States and its followers, including by those that have submitted to United States coercion. When the pressure caused by this sanctions racket reaches a critical point and drives the Korean peninsula into an uncontrollable situation, the investigation results of this Committee will provide an evidentiary basis for holding those responsible accountable.

My delegation takes this opportunity to extend its strong support to and solidarity with the Cuban Government and the people who are fighting to defend their national sovereignty and realize international justice against the high-handedness and arbitrariness in the form of the unilateral embargo by the United States. We also express strong support to and solidarity with the Government and the people of Venezuela, who are fighting to defend their national sovereignty and the cause of socialism.

Such unjust and contemptible acts as the turning of a blind eye to Israel's heinous acts while condemning in every possible way the Syrian Government for fighting to protect its national sovereignty and security should no longer be tolerated.

In conclusion, the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will defend its national peace and security using its powerful nuclear deterrent and will contribute to safeguarding world peace and security.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Abulkarim Al-Jafari, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq.

Mr. Al-Jafari (Iraq) (spoke in Arabic): My delegation first wishes to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák upon his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We also congratulate the Republic of Slovakia and wish Mr. Lajčák the greatest success in this role. We also thank his predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, for his

efforts and wise leadership in guiding the work of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session.

We wish to express our condolences to the victims of the natural disasters that have struck the United States of America, Mexico and other States in the Caribbean region.

The heroic Iraqi forces won a historic victory that put an end to the myth of the extremist-terrorist State in Mosul. Through their great sacrifices and with the assistance of brother countries, the valiant Iraqi forces recaptured the city of Mosul. The Iraqi Armed Forces are fighting several towns, including Tal Afar, which has just been liberated. They have also contributed, through all their branches, to shutting down all terrorist hotbeds in certain other Iraqi cities, such as Hawija.

I therefore wish today to congratulate our Armed Forces and our proud people who made many sacrifices. I hail all honourable members of the civilized world who supported Iraq and its brave forces in the fight against the terrorist bands from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, also known as Da'esh. We scored a major victory without shirking our duty to protect civilians, who were used as human shields by terrorists, or failing to respect the unity, sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Iraq. All branches of the Iraqi Armed Forces, the Iraqi police, the Popular Mobilization Forces, the Peshmerga forces and other anti-terrorist forces contributed to this historic victory.

It is also a victory for the entire world. Even though the war had been raging in Iraq, it affected a vast number peaceful of citizens in some 120 other States. History teaches us that post-conflict periods can be even more challenging than wartime. Indeed, efforts to restore stability, undertake reconstruction and resurrect hope after the liberation of Iraqi cities, through great sacrifices on the humanitarian and development fronts and the environment, which deteriorated badly. Moreover, Da'esh also conducted environmental terrorism by setting fire to oil wells, destroying small dams and flooding agricultural lands. It has also destroyed our cultural heritage sites.

Today, Iraq is entering a new phase in its just fight against Da'esh bands to respond to the challenges of the post-Da'esh period, including the financial challenges of lower oil prices on international markets. We have developed a comprehensive vision for our future that is based on social, economic and security priorities that

serve Iraq and its citizens. This vision comprises the following main axes.

First, we are restoring security, stability and basic services, allowing people to return to their homes and participate in the reconstruction of all that was destroyed by Da'esh, and caring for the families of the martyrs and victims who paid the ultimate price in defending our State. Also, we are caring for the victims of terrorism, rehabilitating societies so that no trace remains of Da'esh or the culture of hatred and violence, mobilizing all national efforts to achieve those national and humanitarian objectives.

Second, we are ensuring respect and peaceful coexistence among all members of society, regardless of religion, ideology or intellectual affiliation. We have fostered a spirit of confidence and mutual trust among our citizens and are protecting minorities and houses of worship of all religions, which is the basis for social reconciliation.

Third, we will prevent the return of the abnormal practices and phenomena that were present in Iraq before Da'esh took control of parts of the country, in particular, the sectarian and nationalist isolationism that were detrimental to the best interests of the State. Such phenomena made it possible for Da'esh to take over cities and control governorates. We will appeal to the population's spirit of citizenship and desire for unity and cooperation, so that neither Da'esh nor any other terrorist organization can return to Iraq by giving coverage or protection in the areas we have retaken.

Fourth, we believe that it is important to foster a spirit of good-neighbourliness based on the shared interests of all States and work according to our national will and independent decision-making. We will not give in to foreign pressure.

Fifth, we will keep arms exclusively in the hands of our national security forces, putting an end to all armed incidents and reviving the rule of law in all sectors of the State.

Sixth, we will continue our formidable fight against corruption in all of its forms and manifestations, because it is fertile ground for terrorism and crime.

Seventh, State institutions must be sheltered from political interference and favouritism in order to foster justice and equal opportunities and to attract highly specialized professionals into the public-sector workforce.

Iraq is a united, independent and sovereign federal State. It is a State based on a federal Constitution adopted in 2005 by Iraqis from all components of society in a transparent and democratic referendum that enjoyed a high degree of participation. The Constitution respects all rights and obligations of all components of Iraqi society and reinforces the value of citizen participation in democratic political processes and effective political representation in all ministries and independent bodies. Attention has been paid to making it possible for all parties concerned to exercise their rights and responsibilities and participate in political, social, cultural and linguistic events — something that is lacking in many ethnically and religiously diversified states. The Government of Iraq continues to encourage cohesiveness among all members of society.

With regard to the relationship between the federal Government and the Regional Government of Kurdistan, the Government is promoting and will continue to promote constructive dialogue to resolve all outstanding issues with the Regional Government of Kurdistan, without preconditions. We have not accepted the unconstitutional decision adopted by the Iraqi Kurdistan region, nor will we abandon Iraq's unity, which is guaranteed by the Constitution. The National Assembly and its representatives, in the interests of Iraq's unity, voted to reject the so-called referendum. It mandated the national Iraqi Government to take measures to preserve the country's unity and address the pending issue, based on Article 1 of the Constitution, which stipulates that the unity of Iraq is one and its sovereignty is indivisible. The Government, in conformity with its responsibilities, has asked the Supreme Court to issue an order rejecting the so-called referendum, which is supposed to be held in Kurdistan on 25 September. It is a violation of the Constitution, particularly with respect to the status of disputed regions characterized by multinationalism and a multi-religious frame of mind.

In the first three months of next year, Iraq will organize legislative and parliamentary elections. All political forces in the country have already begun to prepare for these elections. Through this democratic process, Iraq's pluralist political system will be strengthened, thereby ensuring the political stability that will protect Iraq against future crises. These successes will also make it possible to consolidate economic progress and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the country.

With regard to our relations with the United Nations, we are working with all stakeholders to address pending issues in the Security Council, with a view to being released from the burden of commitments made by previous Iraqi Governments. We have done this gradually, duly respecting international obligations, so that Iraq can resume the status it had enjoyed before the adoption of resolution 661 (1990).

Iraq's deeply held sense of responsibility has included respecting Security Council resolutions on it and on relations between Iraq and Kuwait. We have taken all of the necessary measures to implement resolution 1958 (2010) on the Oil-for-Food Programme. We still face the issue of Kuwait's compensation. Negotiations with our Kuwaiti brothers have begun to settle the issue.

On 21 September, the Security Council adopted the historic resolution 2379 (2017) to collect evidence on the criminal activities perpetrated by Da'esh in Iraq and other States. This resolution establishes a joint investigative mechanism that will comprise judges, prosecutors and Iraqi's criminal experts, working with international experts to collect, compile and preserve evidence against Da'esh in Iraq. We are doing our utmost to ensure that Da'esh is brought to justice for the crimes it committed in Iraq, especially genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Resolution 2379 (2017) is based on the essential pillars of respect for Iraqi sovereignty and legal jurisdiction when it comes to the collection of evidence of crimes Da'esh has committed. We appeal to Member States to provide the necessary financial resources and other forms of support to the joint investigative team.

From this rostrum, Iraq calls for assistance from kindred nuclear-power countries to build a nuclear reactor for peaceful purposes in our country. Iraq wishes to acquire nuclear technology and relaunch various technological sectors on the basis of the right of States to develop nuclear power for peaceful purposes, in accordance with article IV of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which provides that States, particularly developing countries, have the inalienable right to pursue research and develop and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without any discrimination whatsoever.

My country's Government takes note of the threats to peace, security, stability and development throughout the world, which calls for a dialogue

between the various cultures and civilizations. Events in a number of geographic regions reaffirm the importance of reinforcing the culture of peace and strengthening its place on the General Assembly's agenda, especially since Member States have adopted Sustainable Development Goal 16, on peaceful and inclusive societies.

Peaceful coexistence among peoples and communities cannot take place without tolerance, because tolerance is the surest way of establishing modern communities, strengthening social linkages and enriching exchanges among various societies. We cannot dispute the fact that the best way of re-establishing lasting peace and tolerance and for strengthening sustainable development is by ensuring that there are equal chances for everybody and a fair distribution of national resources, without discriminating on the basis of race or religion.

Nor can we overlook the role of religious and social leaders to spread the culture of peace in our countries, for all religions call for peace and peaceful coexistence. In this regard, I would like to make reference to the role in Najaf of Mr. Al-Sistani, who contributed several times to putting an end to the divisions that had so severely affected Iraq.

The adoption of the Takfiri school programme and the dissemination of erroneous Takfiri fatwas through the social media led to extremist intellectual and ideological aberrations that facilitated terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. It imposed a set of mistaken ideas that threaten international peace and security and human civilization, hence the importance of working with UNESCO and other stakeholders to send a message that appropriate education is essential for spreading the values of tolerance and for rejecting extremism and violence.

The Government of Iraq has made security efforts to re-establish peace and security by adopting a project for national reconciliation in order to strengthen cohesion and unity among the Iraqi people, entrench the principles of national unity, and create the appropriate conditions for love and harmony among all components of Iraqi society, while deepening the spirit of citizenship for the sake of the country. Accordingly, all Iraqis have an equal footing in society, free from any discrimination whatsoever, with a view to strengthening the sense of national unity, responding to challenges and providing

the Iraqi people with everything they need to achieve development and prosperity.

Our region has had to face great waves of displacement as a result of worsening crises that have led to the rapid deterioration of the humanitarian situation of the displaced. Host countries are no longer able to provide sufficient assistance on their own. The crisis has become even more complex in Iraq because of the increased number of displaced Iraqis who fled areas that had been under Da'esh control, which is an additional burden for the people of Iraq, who are already suffering from a financial crisis stemming from the drop in oil prices and the growth of military spending to counter terrorism.

We therefore reaffirm the importance of intensifying international efforts aimed at settling the issue of displaced people and provide the necessary financial resources, in order to alleviate the suffering of Iraqi displaced persons. We are undertaking ongoing efforts to strengthen our relations with Arab States and other States in the region, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, Syria, Turkey and Iran. Once again, we reaffirm that an equitable, sustainable peace is the best strategic choice and that the peace process must be comprehensive.

Peace in our region is impossible without the complete withdrawal of Israel from occupied Palestinian Arab lands and the full establishment of a Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital and within the pre-June 1967 borders. The Palestinian question is a priority for Iraq. We will therefore spare no effort in supporting the Palestinian people so that they can enjoy their legitimate right to establish a Palestinian State. We reject all international policies that run counter to the two-State solution or undermine initiatives that could resolve the question of Palestine.

With respect to the situation in Syria, our position has been clear since the crisis there began in 2011. Our position is based on a call for a political solution rather than a military one. We have adopted a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States. Iraq supports efforts to find a peaceful solution to the crisis in Syria in order to protect our Syrian brothers and sisters and preserve the unity of Syrian territory. We have opted for a political solution that would settle all of the issues in the Middle East, including the issues of Yemen and Libya. The genocide of the suffering Rohingya people in Rakhine state in Myanmar, which

has been perpetrated by the armed forces of that country, calls for a firm international humanitarian effort to meet the challenge of the scope of the human rights violations and other crimes, which have been described in the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

We would like to thank all countries participating in the Global Coalition, especially the United States, the European Union and other countries outside the Coalition, for their efforts against terrorism and for their logistics and military support to Iraqi forces in the framework of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country. We need help from the international community to rebuild the liberated areas as quickly as possible. As a result of the war on terrorism, other Iraqi governorates have faced the suspension of reconstruction projects and development opportunities. That needs to be included in the reconstruction campaign.

We see in the liberated cities many suffering women and children. We called on the international community to actively participate in the donor conference that will be organized in Kuwait early next year. We would like to thank Kuwait for all its efforts to support Iraq and to relieve the burden that the displaced have had to carry.

Furthermore, we attach great importance to freeing our society from the culture of hatred, murder and isolation disseminated by Da'esh. We are working to counter the effects of these practices. We need the international community, through our foreign partners, to assist us in form of consultation and financial investment. Once again, we call for partnerships with companies in our friendly countries in investing in the areas of the economy, energy, housing, transportation, health, and the building of hospitals and schools. We are providing a legislative environment conducive to attracting companies and investors.

I would like to express Iraq's thanks to its armed forces for the sacrifices they have made. These armed forces have fought and continue to fight against Da'esh, whether they be forces of the Peshmerga, the army, the police or anti-terrorist forces. Indeed, Da'esh was unable to control the south of the country — it controlled only Mosul and Salah al-Din. However, the people of the south also participated in the struggle against Da'esh in Salah al-Din, Mosul, Anbar, Najaf and all other provinces, including Kirkuk and Diwaniyah. The

people of the south of Iraq participated in that historic battle against terrorism, sacrificing their own lives.

I would like to express our thanks to the Iraqi people for that sacrifice. I am very grateful to all parties, including the Peshmerga, the popular mobilization forces and anti-terrorist forces. We hope that we will

be able to achieve peace, security and prosperity, both economically and socially, for all States and peoples. We hope to obtain cooperation at all levels and in all sectors to achieve a world that is free of terrorism and corruption.

The meeting rose at 3.10 p.m.